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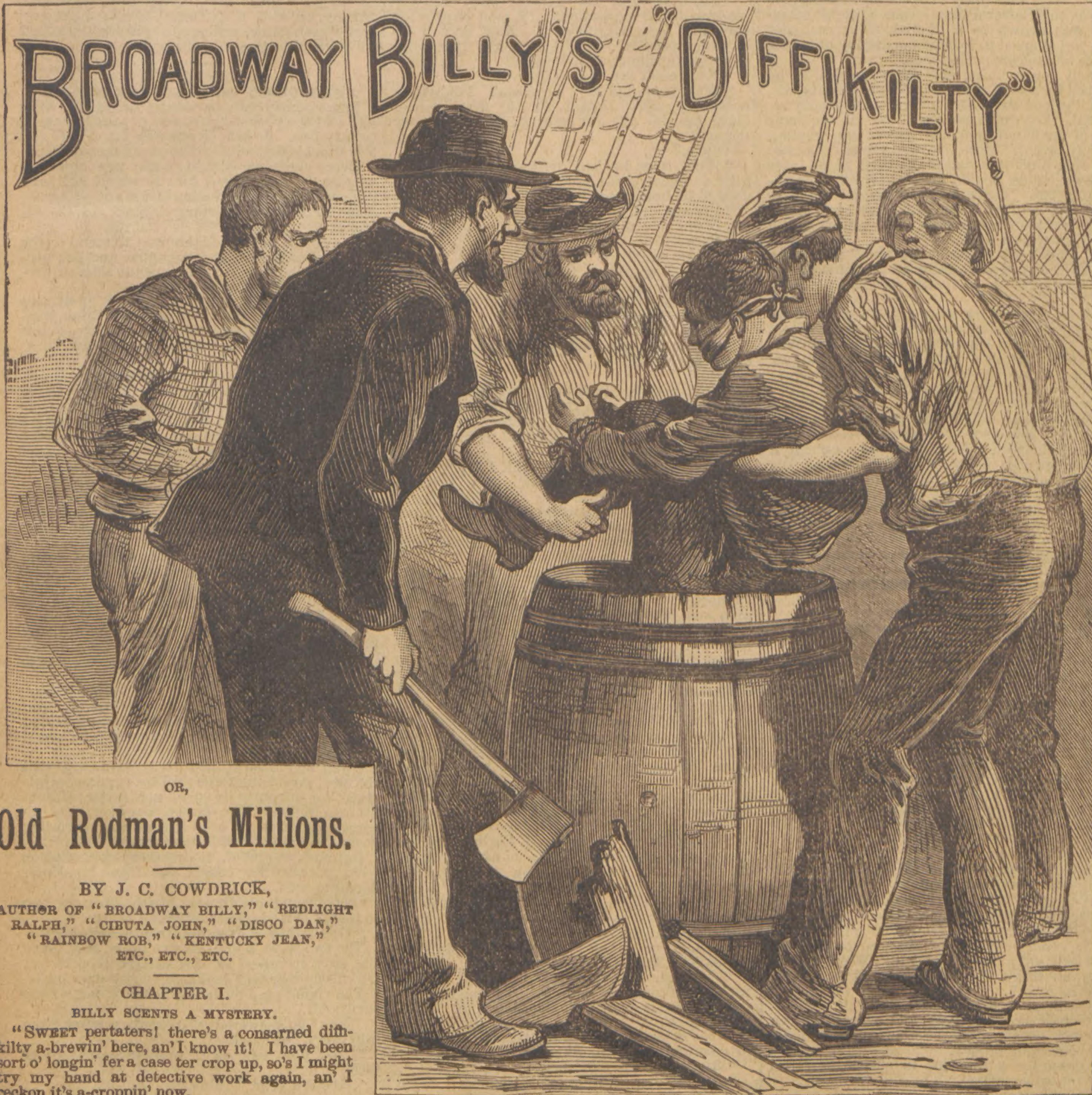
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OR, Old Rodman's Millions.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,

AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY," "REDLIGHT RALPH," "CIBUTA JOHN," "DISCO DAN," "RAINBOW ROB," "KENTUCKY JEAN," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BILLY SCENTS A MYSTERY.

"SWEET pertaters! there's a consarned diffikilty a-brewin' here, an' I know it! I have been sort o' longin' fer a case ter crop up, so's I might try my hand at detective work again, an' I reckon it's a-croppin' now.

"Hey, Skinny!"

"Hello! what's th' racket?"

THEN THE MATE PROCURED AN AX AND KNOCKED ONE END OF THE BARREL IN, AND BILLY WAS DRAWN OUT INTO THE WORLD OF THE LIVING ONCE MORE.

"If it won't be too much labor fer ye ter mosey yer hefty carcass out here fer a brief second or so, come on an' I'll see if I kin drive th' facts o' th' case through yer hair."

"All right, Billy, I'll be there in jest two winks."

The speakers were two boys.

One was Broadway Billy, the Bootblack Bravo, and the other was his chum and partner, "Skinny."

They had at last bought a corner stand such as they had had their minds set upon for so long, and were now actively engaged in business.

They sold papers, etc., and also the thousand and one toys and useful articles usually to be found in the stock of the area merchants.

Their stand was by the corner of a large wholesale house, under the shelter of a wooden awning that extended clear out to the curb, and they could keep open shop in any kind of weather.

A part of their establishment was inclosed, and therein their stock in trade was stored away at night, the boys taking turns in sleeping there to guard it.

Late in the afternoon of the day of which we write, Billy was busily at work at cleaning the tops of their several show-cases, when his attention was drawn to a likely-looking customer who had stopped to look at the display of knives in one of the cases mentioned.

"Sell you a knife, sir?" Billy queried, as he stepped forward. "Best knives in the city, sir, fer th' price; warranted pure steel or money refunded. Let me show 'em to ye. It don't cost nothin' ter handle 'em, an' look at 'em, whether ye buy or not. Here, jist fix yer off eye onto this one; ain't it a daisy? Take it right inter yer own hands, mister, an' look it all over, inside an' out. That's what we've got 'em here fer, sir, so grip right on. It's jest as free as th' air ye breathe, an' a good deal purer. Then here's another, a reg'lar—"

"I don't know as I keer tew buy," the young man interrupted as he accepted the knife rather hesitatingly; "I was only jest a-lookin' at 'em."

"Now, mister, you need a knife in th' worst kind o' way, I know ye do, an' I want ter sell ye one. That's jest what I'm here fer, an' nothin' else. Now there's a knife I kin warrant, an' I'll sell it to ye dirt cheap and cheaper, too."

"How much?" the young man inquired.

"Sixty cents, spot cash."

"Sixty cents! why I kin buy one down th' street there a-ways fer forty cents."

"Can't help it, mister, if ye kin, an' git a chromo ter boot an' yer fare paid home. We sell good articles at a fair price, an' warrant 'em. Why, when ye get back to yer Jersey farm this knife will be th' pride o' th' county!"

"How did you know I was from Jersey?" the young man inquired.

"I guessed at it," Billy answered. "I've been knockin' around here fer some years, an' I kin size a stranger up party close to right, every time."

"Wal, ye hit me right, anyhow."

"Glad ter hear it. An' now let me hit ye right ag'in an' sell ye this knife."

"Call it fifty cents, then, an' I don't know but I will buy it."

"Can't do it," Billy declared, flatly. "We buy low an' sell low, an' have only one price. We're born American citizens, an' deal right on th' fair an' square. Now I kin sell ye *this* knife fer fifty—"

"No, no, never mind. I guess I'll take this one. I do need a knife some, jest as you said, an' this one kind o' suits me. Here's yer money."

"Thanks," said Billy, as he accepted it. "Now, is there anything else?"

"No, no, I—"

"Here's some fine—"

"No, no; nothin' more this time;" and the young man went on his way.

"Well, ev'ry sale counts one, anyhow," Billy mused, "an' I've made quite a few of 'em to-day, an' so has Skinny. If he only had a little more chin it would be better for th' firm, but he does right well, an' I can't complain. We're makin' it pay, an' that's all I kin expect till we git our hands in good."

He went on with his work then.

Presently he looked up, and, glancing down the street, his attention became suddenly fixed upon something he saw.

He gazed for a moment in silence, and then came his exclamation:

"Sweet pertaters!"

Then followed the words with which our story opens.

Skinny, who was doing some work in the in-

closed part of their establishment, soon came forth.

He was as skinny as ever.

"Well, what is it, Billy?" he asked, as he joined his partner.

"D'y'e see that young man down th' street there?—that country-lookin' chap that is leanin' 'gainst th' post?"

"Yes, I've got my peepers onto him."

"Well, jist keep 'em there while I orate."

"All right, fire away."

"Well, I sold that feller a knife a little while ago, an'—"

"I thought ye would, th' way ye was a-chinin' 'bout knives."

"Shut up! ye need yer breath. I've heard that fat folks gits short o' wind mighty easy. I sold him a knife as I said, an' while I was doin' it I picked up the fact that he is from Jersey."

"That's nothin'. It's a wonder ye didn't learn his hull fambly history, from his grandmother down."

"He didn't give me no sort o' chance. I was in a fair way ter pump him, but he rushed off afore I could do it."

"Well, is *that* all ye've got ter say ter me?" Skinny demanded.

"No, that *ain't* all. If ye'd only keep yer pie-trap closed fer a minute, I'd soon be able ter spread th' facts out afore ye. Now, do you see anything peculiar round here, takin' that feller as th' center-figger o' th' fiction?"

"No, I can't say as I do, Billy."

"Well, that *ain't* very surprisin'. I didn't see nothin' peculiar myself at th' first glance. Have ye still got yer eyes glued to th' center figger?"

"Sure."

"Well, now let 'em drift away a little, an' take in them three fellers standin' close to th' door o' th' hotel there."

"I've got 'em."

"D'y'e know any one of 'em?"

"Sure."

"Which one?"

"Why, Tony Duke, th' one that's dressed up like a reg'lar masher."

"Korrect! an' th' biggest sharper in th' hull town o' Gotham!"

"So I've heard."

"Ye heard right, then. Don't know neither of th' others, eh?"

"No."

"Neither do I. It seems purty clear, though, that one of 'em is a friend o' Tony's—I mean that prize-fighter lookin', bull-neck feller; an' th' old gent there looks like one of th' ton. What d'ye think?"

"Guess ye've got it about right, Billy."

"Jest what I guess myself. Now is there anything else ye notice in pertic'lar? Don't stand an' stare at 'em; make believe ye're tendin' straight ter biz."

"Why, they seem ter me ter be talkin' 'bout th' feller you sold th' knife to."

"There! now ye've got onto th' idea exactly, Skinny. That's jest what they *are* doin', sure as shootin'. When I first tumbled to it, th' old man was pointin' him out to Tony an' his pard, an' was tellin' 'em somethin' in a sort o' earnest-like way. An' that is why I say there's a consarned diffikilty brewin' here, an' I know it. An' if there is, an' I don't make th' wrong sort o' kalkerlation, they kin count Broadway Billy right inter swim with 'em, you bet! I've been sort o' pinin' fer some sort o' mystery ter crop up an' give me a chance ter try my hand at detective work once more. I'm never so happy as when I'm up to my ears in some sort o' muss. Yes, my gay an' festive pard, that's jest what's th' matter with Hanner; there's mischief o' some sort here, an' don't ye fergit it! I've got jest th' sharpest nose fer musses an' mystery that ye most ever heard of. Why, I kin smell Dutch cheese an' sauerkraut two blocks away without an effort. Oh! I'm a terror on th' smell, I am sure. But, I'm driftin' away from th' p'int. As I said, I believe there's a diffikilty sproutin' up here, an' if it is so, I'll show Inspector Br—Hello! the old gent is movin' off."

"Yes, ye're right. I reckon he's finished his biz with Tony Duke an' his chum."

"That's about th' lay o' the land, and I'd like ter know who th' old man is. If I could divide myself up as it were, I would foller him. But I can't, an' th' only way fer me ter git a halter onto the skeem is ter keep my peepers peeled fer th' countryman. Eh, Skinny?"

"Right you are, me dear."

"An' th' more I think of it th' more I begin ter feel assured that there *is* some sort o' a tr'berlation about ter transpire."

"Been dinin' on dictionary?"

"No, I ain't been dinin' on dictionary, nor

nothin' o' th' kind. I'm talkin' reg'lar U. S. hoss sense. If ye fail ter ketch on, ye must lay th' blame to yer limited understanding. Fat folks don't allus have an over supply o' thinkin' machinery. But, you're bound ter keep me away from th' subjeck of discourse. Le's see—where did I take my tex? I believe I said I must keep my peepers onto th' countryman in order ter git at th' root of the evil, didn't I?"

"Yes, that's what ye said."

"Then that must be what I mean, I reckon. An' that's what I'm goin' ter do. Say, d'ye think ye kin run this shop fer a while alone?"

"I'd choke myself if I couldn't!"

"An' I'd choke ye, too. Jest 'tend right ter biz, an' in case I don't turn up reg'lar, you keep th' mill a-goin'. I'll be back sooner er later, sure."

"All right, pardner. I'll keep up steam."

"Bully boy! Ye see, Skinny, I'm bound ter be a defective—I mean detective—if it is in th' wood, an' every case o' queerness that I stumble onto I'm goin' ter sift out if I kin. It won't do ter let folks git th' idee that William o' Broadway has retired from th' field, ye know; besides I want ter win th' conference o' Inspector Br—Hello! there goes th' countryman, an' now I'm after him. Keep things straight, Skinny, an' if I find Tony Duke is up to any sort o' gum-game, ye'll see me prance him round th' circle o' justice wi' bells on."

CHAPTER II.

JOSIAH GREEN FROM BUGVILLE CORNERS.

THE countryman to whom Broadway Billy had sold the pocket-knife, was a young man of twenty-five. Josiah Green was his name, and this was his first visit to the great metropolis.

Every moment, almost, some new object of wonder (to him) caused him to stand still and gaze with undisguised admiration and astonishment, and he was enjoying himself to the extreme.

One of his chief delights was to stand on the corner of some busy thoroughfare and eat peanuts while he watched the constant tides of people and vehicles flow by.

"Gosh!" he was wont to exclaim, "but this is an all-fired big taown! I used tew think Bugville Corners was something of a place, but it can't begin tew hold a candle to New York. Gosh, no!"

Bugville Corners was the place where Josiah hailed from. He had been invited by his uncle and cousin to come to the city and spend a few weeks with them, and had accepted. The uncle's name was Jarius Rodman, and his son, the cousin mentioned, was named Owen. Josiah Green's mother had been Jarius Rodman's sister. She was now dead.

The Rodmans were rich, and when Kate Rodman, Josiah's mother, married Elisha Green, a poor young farmer, her family cast her off.

Owen Rodman, however, who was now a man about Josiah's age, possessing none of the false pride of the family, had visited his aunt as often as he could, and he and Josiah had become the best of friends.

This did not please Owen's father at all, and he frequently stormed about a son of his associating with "country louts," as he was pleased to call his sister's husband and son.

These stormings had no effect upon Owen, after he became of age, and he loved his aunt dearly. He was at her home at the time of her death, and gave her his promise that he would ever be a friend to her son.

Owen had often wished to have Josiah visit the city, promising to pay all his expenses while there, for of course he could not invite him to his own home. Mrs. Green, however, had always opposed it, so, until the present occasion, Josiah had never beheld "mighty Gotham."

But now, as stated, he was there by invitation from not only his cousin, but from his Uncle Jarius as well.

One evening at dinner Jarius Rodman had suddenly looked up at Owen and said:

"Owen, do you ever hear from Kate's boy?"

The two were alone at the table, they being the only members of the family then living. Owen's mother had died some years previously.

The young man looked up quickly, not a little surprised.

"Yes," he answered; "I receive a letter from him every few weeks."

"And how long is it now since his mother died?"

"About a year, I think."

Silence followed for some minutes.

Presently Jarius spoke again.

"Owen," he said, "I have begun to realize that I was a little too severe with Kate, and I

am sorry for my treatment of her. I suppose she loved that Elisha Green, or, at any rate, thought she did, and it amounts to about the same thing."

"Your sorrow comes rather late," said the son, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I know it, my boy, I know it," was the return. "I have been unreasonably severe, but you can never understand how the family pride was cut when Kate made such a fool of herself."

"No, I believe I never can," Owen agreed. "Elisha Green is an honest, well-to-do man, and I like him. I guess Aunt Kate never regretted marrying him."

"If she did, no one ever knew it. She had pride enough to keep her secret."

"Well, I have seen her at home, and you never did. She was contented and reasonably happy, I am sure."

"Maybe, maybe."

"I tell you she was. I have spent weeks at her home, and had plenty of opportunity to judge. She loved her husband, and when a woman does that and strives to make him happy, she is bound to be happy herself. If I were to love a country girl I would do the same as Aunt Kate did."

"You would!"

"I certainly would."

"Well, well, we will let it pass. What is done is done. What I was going to say, though: why not invite Kate's boy to come to the city and spend a few weeks with us?"

"Do you mean it?"

"Certainly; I am sorry for my treatment of Kate, and I must show some friendly kindness toward the boy. Write and extend an invitation from me for him to come."

"I will do so. And when you come to know him well I am sure you will like him."

"I hope I shall."

"And so do I. He is the soul of honor, and when once he gets used to the city and city ways you will have no need to feel ashamed of him."

"Well, send for him to come, anyhow."

"I will."

And so it came about that Josiah Green found himself in New York.

This, the day of which our first chapter treats, was his second day there, and he was strolling about to "see the sights."

Owen Rodman held a responsible position in a large business house, and would not be at liberty until four o'clock, so Josiah was enjoying himself alone.

Four o'clock, however, was now near at hand.

On the previous day the young countryman had arrived in the city about noon, and following directions given him by Owen, had gone at once to the Rodman residence.

There he had spent the remainder of the day and the evening, and this was really his first day for sight-seeing.

When four o'clock was drawing near, he started for the store where Owen was employed, and then it was that Broadway Billy followed him.

The latter noticed that Tony Duke and his companion did not do so.

"Well," Billy mused, as he walked along, "it ain't much trouble ter shadder this feller. An elephant might do it if it tried, I reckon. And I wonder what's ter come of it! Mebby it's all a false alarm, an' there ain't no mystery at all. But I reckon there *is*. Anyhow, I'm on ther road ter find out, an' if I don't find any game, it won't be because I didn't hunt."

When the young countryman reached the store, where his cousin was to meet him, he stopped and looked around while he waited for him to appear.

This store was one in which Jarius Rodman had a large interest.

Billy stopped, too, and stationed himself where he could keep the young countryman in sight.

In a short time Owen Rodman made his appearance.

He saw Josiah at once, and hurried to where he stood and shook hands with him.

Broadway Billy looked on, and as he did so, he thought:

"Now, that feller there looks ter be true blue, an' if he is, I reckon he'll be able ter take care o' th' greenhorn without any o' my help. But, that don't remove th' stupenjus idee I've got that there's a consarned diffikilty a-brewin', an' I'm goin' ter see th' thing to th' end. Some o' these days I s'pose I'll go pokin' my nose around inter other people's business, an' somebody will pull it fer me. Can't help *that*. I was born fer jest sich work, an' I can't help it no more than I kin help bein' hungry. I'm grim death after

anything that looks like a muss or a mystery. I'm bound ter be a detective, an' if I kin win th' conference o' Inspector—Hello! there they go; an' now, Billy, lift ther trail an' foller."

Owen and Josiah were starting off, and in a moment the young ferret was right at their heels.

On such a crowded street he had no fear of being suspected, and he got close enough to hear what they said.

"Say, Owen," Josiah presently remarked, "I want tew know how it is that folks kin tell that I'm from Jersey?"

"Why, they no doubt judge from your appearance."

"Do tell! Do I look so much onlike other folks?"

"Well, you see the style at the Corners is not New York style, Josiah; and then, too, your manner and your way of talking are different from what you see and hear in the city."

"Gosh! I thought somethin' was wrong. Now, Owen, see here: I want tew look like other folks while I'm here, an' I want you tew rig me out in clothes in th' proper style. Never mind th' expense; I kin stand that."

"Very well, I will do so, and gladly. I will take you out after dinner and fix you up so that you won't know yourself."

"I s'pose this hat is ruther out o' date, ain't it?"

"Well, yes, rather; and then, city men do not wear such heavy boots as yours. Don't be offended at my plainness."

"Oh! that's all right; you an' me is too good friends fer that."

"I hope so, certainly. You see, your lavender trowsers do not quite reach your ankles; your green coat is far too short at the waist and in the sleeves; your turn-down collar and flaring red tie are not becoming; your blue vest is cut too low, and does not match the rest of your attire. You will have to have a new outfit, from crown to toe. And I am glad you mentioned it, for it would have been awkward for me to speak of it first."

"Haw, haw, haw! I must look like a reg'lar yam. Thank 'e, Owen, fer yer outspoken opinion. Why, up at th' Corners I was a reg'lar swell, and I cut out Josh Beans last Sunday night and went home with Lize Stump jest as slick as grease! Why, I thought I was right up in style."

Broadway Billy smiled broadly as he listened.

"The trouble is, you are *too* stylish," said Owen, laughing.

"So it seems; an' no wonder that lad that sold me this knife knowed where I hail from."

"Been buying a knife?"

"Yes; look at it an' see what it's worth."

Owen took the knife, glanced at it, and said:

"Why, this is a good knife, and made by one of the best cutlers. What did you pay for it?"

"Sixty cents."

"Sixty cents! Well, you have certainly hit a bargain, unless there is some flaw in the knife that I can't see."

"An' there ain't, you kin bet!" Broadway Billy mentally exclaimed. "Th' secret o' success in biz is ter deal on th' square, an' that is th' way *I* deal, every time!"

CHAPTER III.

OLD NOAH RODMAN'S WILL.

OLD Noah Rodman, father of Jarius and Kate, and consequently grandfather of Owen Rodman and Josiah Green, was crowding on toward eighty years of age.

He was a millionaire, and was very eccentric in many of his ways and ideas.

Of late he had been in failing health, and it was but reasonable to suppose that he was nearing his mortal end.

He realized this, and had now made his preparations, so far as the disposal of his worldly wealth was concerned.

About two weeks prior to the time of our story, he one day sent for his son, Jarius, to come and see him.

Of course the son obeyed.

The old man occupied a substantial house on one of the now-considered down-town streets, and lived all alone, with the exception of a few faithful, well-tried and well-paid servants.

Here his father had lived before him, away back in the days of the Revolution.

When Jarius Rodman made his appearance there, in response to the summons, he found his father in his library, reclining upon an invalid's chair.

"Father," Jarius said, as he advanced and took the old man's hand, "how do you do?"

"Failing, Jarius, slowly but surely failing," was the feeble reply.

"You sent for me, father, and I have come to see you. I was coming this evening, anyhow, but when your servant came, I set out at once."

"Yes, I sent for you, my son, because I am not long for this world now, and want to prepare to leave it."

"You may live many years yet."

"No, no, it is folly to say so. And now, pay attention to what I have to say."

"I will do so."

"Know, then, first of all, that I have this day burned my will."

"Burned your will?" cried Jarius, in the greatest surprise.

"Yes, I have burned my will."

"But, father, why did you do that? Are you going to make another?"

"I am."

"Oh! well, then, of course it is all right. No doubt you have decided to make some slight changes."

"I shall make almost a complete change."

This was a startling declaration.

Jarius Rodman knew that his father had willed his entire wealth to him, with the exception of some trifling bequests to servants and others, and now to learn that he intended to make an almost complete change, was startling news indeed.

"You are surprised," the old man went on, "and well you may be. But it is true. I have sent for a lawyer, and as soon as he comes I shall make an entirely new will."

"May I inquire what changes you intend to make?" Jarius questioned.

"Certainly; and I will tell you. I intend, as far as possible, to repair an act of injustice. Thirty years ago my daughter, your sister Kate, married Elisha Green, who was then my coachman at my summer residence in New Jersey. In our anger we cast her off, your mother and I, and would never own her. She went to live with her husband on a small farm he owned, and I never saw her again. All this, of course, you know, for you were as bitter against her as were we."

"One year ago, or thereabouts, Kate died, and since then I have had no peace of mind. I realized then the injustice I had done her. Elisha Green was a sober, honest and worthy man, fairly well educated, and had I given Kate her just portion of my wealth, at that time, and forgiven her as I ought to have done, her lot would have been far brighter and she might be alive to-day."

"That is the wrong which I intend to right as far as possible. Kate being dead, I cannot, with a clear conscience, give anything to you that was denied *her*. I have already given you such help as has enabled you to amass a fortune for yourself, while Kate drudged her life away on her husband's little farm. It is true that Elisha Green is fairly well-to-do now, but Kate's labor brought him half of it at least."

"Having made up my mind to this course, there is but one thing for me to do; namely, to cut you off as I did Kate, and leave all my wealth that I had willed to you to be divided equally between your son and hers. And this I shall do."

Jarius Rodman was furious. To be cut off thus from the immense wealth which he had always looked upon as his, was a heavy blow.

It was all that he could do to restrain a burst of passion right in his father's presence.

Well he knew, though, that he could do nothing to change the old man's mind, and after a moment's reflection he saw that his best course would be to agree with him that he was right.

But it was a bitter pill to down.

If Kate Rodman's parents had been angry with her when she married beneath her station, her brother Jarius had been even more harsh toward her than they.

And now to find that his son, Owen, was to be placed upon an even footing with Kate's boy, Jarius Rodman, "the lout!" was too much.

In his father's presence, though, he had to choke down his rising choler as best he could, and act a part.

"Well, father," he said, "I cannot say that you are not right. No doubt we were all a little too severe with Kate, and there is no other way in which you can right the wrong. Certainly it is for you to say to whom your wealth shall go. Still—"

"Still what?"

"I was on the point of saying that it does not seem hardly right to place that country lout's son upon an even footing with *my* son."

"Egad! that is just where I am doing the act of justice!" the old man cried. "If I had given Kate her fortune at the time of her marriage,

her boy would now be the equal of yours in all respects. In fact, he might have been smarter for Kate was your superior, mentally, Jarius and her husband was far from being a fool. Excuse my bluntness, but you know it is true."

"Yes, no doubt; and she showed her superior refinement when she eloped one night at midnight with that—"

"There, there, say no more now," the old man interrupted: "here comes the lawyer, I think."

Jarius Rodman's rage scarcely knew any bounds. It was bad enough to have the immense fortune snatched from his own grasp, but it was worse to see half of it go to Josiah Green!

There was no help for it, though; Noah Rodman's mind once set, there was no moving him from his fixed purpose.

The caller proved to be the lawyer, and within an hour the new will was made and signed, Jarius Rodman himself being one of the witnesses.

"There," said old Noah, with a sigh of relief, "thank goodness that is done, and my mind is at rest. You take the will, Mr. Monks," to the lawyer, "put it in a safe place, and produce it when it is required."

"Then turning to Jarius, the lawyer remarked:

"You take it coolly, Mr. Rodman, for a man who has just had a fortune of two millions or more taken right out of his very grasp."

Jarius smiled.

"I am perfectly satisfied," he said, "and I agree with my father that he is right in making the change. He has told you his reasons."

"Yes, and the change is certainly a just one."

"I did not expect to see Jarius take it so calmly," the old man remarked, "but I am glad he can see it in the true light. I believe that I have only done what is just and right."

"I believe you have, father, and I, too, am glad the change is made. At first I could not take kindly to the idea, but now I have changed my mind."

When Jarius Rodman went home, though, and had locked himself in his library, he gave full vent to his wrath.

Flinging his hat down upon the floor, he clinched his hands tightly and began to pace up and down the room in a most excited manner.

"Curses upon it!" he hissed, "to have a fortune thus snatched away from me, and all because of a sudden whim of that old dotard! And, most of all, to have half of it given to that miserable clown—lout—boor, the son of a low-born countryman! Oh! it is too much, too much."

Up and down and around he paced, pulling at his beard and tearing at his hair like a madman.

"The old fool!" he broke out again, "I wonder if he thinks I will put up with it? If he had left all to Owen, I would not care; but to see that rustic put upon an equal footing, and to see half the fortune go to him; never! I was forced to appear satisfied in the presence of the lawyers and others, but by heavens I am not!"

After a few more turns up and down he broke out once more.

"Never!" he exclaimed, as he struck his fist against his hand. "Owen shall have all! But, how am I to bring it about? It is lucky that I know Monks, the lawyer, as well as I do, or I might approach him with a liberal fee. But, Monks is not the man to enter into any sort of crooked scheme, and it is lucky I know it. No, that is not to be thought of. But, how then? Can I get the will and destroy it, I wonder? No; impossible! Monks has no doubt put it under lock and key by this time. How am I to do it? I care not what the means, so long as I attain my end. My son must have all."

Up and down he continued to pace for some time longer, and then suddenly he stopped short and exclaimed:

"Just the thing, by heavens! It will set the case just as I want it, and it will be impossible for any one to suspect my hand in the matter. Lucky I played the part I did when the will was being made. There will be witnesses to prove that I agreed with my father perfectly. The whole game is now in my hands, and I shall play to win. My son shall have all!"

It was a few days after this that the conversation between Jarius and his son Owen, regarding Josiah Green, took place, as recorded in the preceding chapter; and the result of that conversation was the visit of Josiah to the city.

With these facts of the case before him, the reader will see that Broadway Billy was not far wrong when he declared there was "a diffikilty a-brewin'."

CHAPTER IV.

BILLY MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.

"SWEET pertaters! there's a full-grown son o' sunny Africa in th' fence somewhere, an' I know it! Didn't I remark that there was a consarned diffikilty on th' tapers, or whatever it is they call it, an' ain't here th' proof of it? Great jumpin' toads! but I'm goin' inter this case, an' I'll lay th' hull secret bare from Generosity ter Relations!"

Broadway Billy, this, of course.

He was venturing to make use of some words however, which were a little beyond his reach. By "on th' tapers," he evidently meant "on the tapis;" while "from Generosity ter Relations" was no doubt intended for "from Genesis to Revelations."

But, little matter. He knew what he meant, whether he expressed himself entirely clearly or not, and that was sufficient. It was to himself that he was talking, in whispered exclamation.

We left him following Owen Rodman and Josiah Green, and listening to their conversation, enjoying the young countryman's quaint ways immensely.

While they remained on Broadway, where the crowd was great, Billy could keep close to them.

Presently, though, when they turned into one of the cross-streets, he found that he would have to use more care and caution.

There were comparatively few persons here, and the danger of his being seen and suspected was greatly increased.

The two young men kept right on, though, and did not once look back.

"Well," Billy mused, "them two fellers is fast friends enough, if appearances goes fer anything, an' I reckon they do. I seldom make a mistake in that way. I kin tell a tramp four blocks off, an' I'm a terror when I set out ter go fer a feller on his appearance. How I could go fer him if he didn't appear, I won't stop ter study out now. I'm hot on a trail, an' I must tend strictly ter biz. As I said, sez I, as some old feller in a story-book puts it, them two fellers is friends, an' I know it. I needn't be afeerd ter leave th' country chap in his care. If Tony Duke shows up, though, then I'll have ter be on my muscle. 'Oh! I know just as sure as I know anything'"—singing—"that there's a diffikilty a-brewin', but where an' how is ter be found out? I've found out things before, an' I reckon I'm good fer another round er two. What I want is ter wake up Inspector Brines to th' fact that I'm on deck, an'—Hello! they're takin' a car."

This was true.

Owen had signaled a car, and he and Josiah now got aboard.

Billy looked around quickly.

There happened to be another car only a short distance behind the first.

"This was one of the then new "smokers."

Waiting until it came along, Billy swung aboard, paid his fare, and was still on the trail.

The first car, as is always the case when two cars are running so close together, made more stops than the second one, and so the two did not at any time get very far apart.

Broadway Billy kept his eye fixed upon the car ahead.

When the two young men got off he meant to know it.

He had by this time had detective experience enough to know pretty well how to "shadow" a person, and knew that he must see without being seen.

Here, in the two cars, was one of the best pieces of luck he had lately found.

The two young men rode quite a distance, but finally got out and turned into one of the cross-streets toward the west.

Billy's car was then close to theirs, and when it came to the same street the young men were only a short distance away.

The young detective got off, and after waiting a moment to allow the pair to get further ahead he set out after them.

He had not far to go now.

Presently the two stopped before one of the finest houses on the block.

Instantly Billy was seated upon a stepping-stone, behind the friendly shelter of a tree, around which was a protecting box.

The two young men did not enter the house at once, but stood gazing down the street in the other direction.

Wondering what they could be looking at, Billy ventured to lean back so that he might see too.

Then it was that he gave vent to the string of exclamations which opens this chapter.

What he saw was what brought them forth.

There, coming up the street, was the same old gentleman whom he had seen with Tony Duke and his companion only a short time previously.

He was now only a short distance from the young men, and when he came up he put out his hand to the young countryman in a most friendly way.

This man was Jarius Rodman.

"My dear Josiah," he exclaimed, "how are you enjoying yourself?"

Billy was not quite near enough to hear what was said, but he could see the friendly greeting.

"Oh, I am having a bully time!" was Josiah's reply, as he grasped his uncle's proffered hand.

"I have often heard tell that New York was quite a sizable place, but I had no idea what a gosh-all-fired big taown it is. Why, Trentown Corners ain't nowheres now. I used tew think that was somethin' of a place, but it can't light a taller dip tew New York. Gosh, no!"

Jarius Rodman laughed heartily, and gave his nephew's hand a still heartier shake, and then he led the way into the house.

"Yes, sir-ee," exclaimed Billy, as he jumped up and executed a pigeon-wing on the sidewalk, or tried to, "there's a nigger in the fence, sure! Now when I saw that same old gent p'intin' that young countryman out to Tony Duke an' his pard, he hadn't no sich a look o' love an' affection, not by a high kick. In fact he looked so mighty th' other way that I jumped right slap to th' clusion that there was trouble a-brewin'. An' now I think so more'n ever. Great mule-tails! ain't here th' proof of it? What more do I want? One minute th' old gent is a-lookin' swords, daggers, Gatlin'-guns an' p'izen at th' young feller, an' pintin' him out to one o' th' worst crooks in all New Damsteran, an' th' next minute he's a-gazin' upon him in a milk-an'-honey sort o' way, as if he was th' one 'tic'lar bright star o' his affection. Oh! he can't cram that down the neck o' Broadway Billy; not any! I was born with my eye-teeth already cut, I reckon, though mom says not. She'd orter know, I s'pose, but I know, too. If I wasn't born with 'em, they sprouted mighty soon after, that's sure. Anyhow, they're cut now, an' I kin see jest as far through a pavin'-stone as my neighbor kin. An' I see a diffikilty here, sure pop."

"Now, how'm I ter tackle th' case? It seems that's where I allus git stuck in th' mud. I wish ter goodness I had a full set o' brains like other folks. It seems ter me most o' my brains must a' run ter tongue. I dunno, but that is th' way it 'pears. If I had my full complaint"—complement, no doubt—"o' brains now, I'd know jest wher' ter grab onto this bird o' mystery, ter yank its tail-feathers th' quickest. But I ain't got 'em, so I'll have ter blunder along as best I kin. But that ain't ther way ter win fame, an' fame ain't a bad thing ter have, so I'm told. If Nipalong Beenapart hadn't had fame, he wouldn't a' been a part o' hist'ry, I reckon. Who was he, anyhow? But, no matter, that ain't to th' p'int. What I want is ter show Inspector Br— Hello! jest look there! Sweet pertaters, gum-boots, hoop-skirts an' bustles! if that ain't a coon that I used ter know, then I'll eat my trowsers' an' go home barefooted!"

While holding this little bit of conversation with himself, Billy was gazing at the house where the three men had entered.

A young colored man now coming out, caused him to add his closing exclamation of surprise.

He was a darky with whom Billy was well acquainted, he having once been a porter in a hotel where Billy often blackened boots.

When he came out he turned toward where Billy stood.

Billy had slipped behind the tree at the first sign of the opening of a door, and of course had not been seen.

When the darky came along, though, he stepped out suddenly beside him and exclaimed:

"Marcellus Johnsing, by th' livin' fishes?"

"H—hallo!" the darky cried, as he started and looked around, "who—who—Why, bless me if it hain't Broadway Billy! How d'e do, Billy? I's powerful glad ter see ye, I is; how you gittin' on, anyhow?"

Billy shook hands with his colored friend, and then, as he walked along with him, responded:

"Oh! I'm gettin' on all hunky, Marcellus; how is it with you?"

"Fu'st rate, Billy, fu'st rate. I's got a pow'ful nice place now; big pay, lots to eat, an' nothin' much ter do."

"Happy nig! Where is this haven o' delight you speak of?"

"He, he, he! you mean to ax where I's livin', I s'pose."

"Cert; that's what I'm tryin' ter git through yer wool, Marcy."

"Well, I'll tell you, in course. I's now in de employ ob Mr. Noah Rodman, a rich old man. Best place I eber had, too, sure's you live."

"Not much ter do, eh?"

"Lawd, no!"

"Lots to eat, ye say?"

"Piles on piles of it, an' th' best."

"Big pay, too?"

"Fu'st-class pay."

"Then you'd orter be happy an' grow fat. But, Marcellus, you don't seem ter look as bright an' hopeful as you'd orter under sich a blazin' star o' prosperity. What's th' diffikilty? Ain't goin' inter cornsumption, be ye?"

"Billy, I's seein' trouble, I is; a pow'ful sight o' trouble."

"Trouble! you?"

"Yes, trouble, an' piles on piles of it."

"Why, what seems ter be th' matter? Ain't been gittin' married, have ye?"

"Billy, you an' me was allus purty good friends, an' I'll done tell you all about it."

"All right; fire away."

"Well, de whole secret ob de matter am—Chloe Frost."

"Sweet pertaters!"

CHAPTER V.

BILLY PUMPS FOR POINTS.

BROADWAY BILLY had heard of Chloe Frost before.

His exclamation at the mention of her name proved that.

Let me explain.

Billy had made the acquaintance of Marcellus Johnson when the latter was a porter in a hotel, as stated.

At that time Chloe Frost, a good-looking young colored girl, was employed in the same hotel as a waitress.

Marcellus fell in love with her at first sight, and she did not seem to be by any means unfavorably impressed by him.

But, sad to relate, Marcellus was bashful, and had not the courage to press his suit.

He used to confide in Broadway Billy, who generally gave him good advice to the effect that he must brace up and go right in to win.

"You want to git right up on your muscle," Billy would say, "and go for that gal in a way she can't mistake. Jest drop right down onto yer knees an' tell her ye love her. Tell her that yer heart is a-flutterin' around inside of ye like a bird in a cage. Tell her that ye're willin' ter die fer her, if necessary, but that ye'd a heap ruther live—with her; an' when ye've got that far th' rest will come easy enough. Jest try it, an' if she don't chuck herself right inter yer manly arms, I miss my guess."

Marcellus would accept this friendly advice, but when opportunity would offer for him to put it to use, his heart would fail him.

He was bashful to an unusual degree. At every difficulty he would hasten at once to consult Billy, and the boy had a great deal of fun at his expense.

But, he retained Marcellus's friendship through it all, as he never let the darky's secret become known. Marcellus was an honest fellow, quite shapely and good-looking, but—he was too bashful.

Finally Chloe left the hotel, and then after a time, Marcellus went away too, and this was the first time Billy had seen him since.

"Yes, dat am jest de fact," the darky affirmed, following Billy's exclamation; "I owe all o' my troubles to dat same Chloe Frost."

"Why, Marcellus, what has she been doin' to ye?"

"Why, she 'lows dat low-down nigger, Bob White, ter wait 'pon her, an' don't notice me no more."

"Oh-ho! Bob has cut ye out, has he? Well, I expected he would do it, sooner er later, sure pop. He's got more nerve than you have, Marcy, an' kin chin like lightnin'; an' in this lively century o' th' times, old boy, th' man with th' most cheek an' th' most chin is th' feller that is goin' ter git thar. Times ain't like they used ter was, my seal-brown friend, an' brains an' merit is below par."

"But, she knows I love her, Billy, she can't help knowin' it; an' to think she'd shake me off fer him."

"Have ye ever told her ye love her?"

"Well, er—no; but Lawd! I've made eyes at her lots o' times, an' so has she at me; an' such eyes—um!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Billy, unable to restrain his mirth.

This was the same Marcellus.

"You kin laugh," protested the darky, "but I kain't see whar de fun comes in."

"I was thinkin' about eyes," Billy declared. "Eyes won't do, Marcy, old sport; what is wanted is tongue, an' lots of it. Now that is jest where Bob has got th' bulge on ye. Eyes is all right in their place, but they've got ter be backed up wi' chin."

"I know it, Billy, but I can't help it. Only de odder week I passed by de house whar she lives, an' she was out by de area gate. I done stopped an' lifted my hat bolite-like, an' spoke to her."

"Bully fer you!"

"Yes; an' she seemed pow'ful glad ter see me, fer she done blushed like."

"Blushed! Ha, ha, ha! Oh! that's too good! Who ever seen a cake o' chocolate blush? It's jest th' same thing."

"Oh! but she did, though, Billy, shua! She done blush like er—er—"

"Like a rose, frinstance?"

"Well, no, not prezackly dat way, but more like er—er— Well, she done blush, anyhow."

"Well, I'll take yer word fer it. Go on."

"Den I said it was a lubly evenin', an' she 'lowed it was, an' den we had quite a talk about de weather an' odder things."

"You really talked with her?"

"Shua!"

"Then, what are ye howlin' about? Why don't ye go right in with a whoop an' win th' chromo?"

"Dat's jest what I's g'wine ter tell ye, Billy."

"Well, why don't ye then? I'm all ears, as th' jackass said, so go ahead."

"Well, when we'd talked de wedder an'udder t'ings about dry, I wanted ter tell her I loved her, an' tried ter. I said 'Chloe, I—I—I' an' dere I stuck."

"Couldn't git it out ez it were, eh?"

"No; an' Chloe she hung her head an' laff, an' jest den up comes Bob White."

"My deah Miss Frost," he say, "how do you do? an' what you s'pose he done do?"

"Give it up."

"Why, he done pinch her on both her plump cheeks, an' den he chuck her under de chin. Golly! I was dat white wi' rage—"

"Oh! come, now, draw it mild."

"I—I was dat inzasperated, Billy, dat I could 'a' cut him, and cut him deep, too, if I had had a razor."

"What did ye do?"

"Why, I done looked at him awful black, an' den—"

"Ha, ha, ha! ye don't mean ter say ye looked black at him, do ye? Most anybody would think ye might 'a' looked at him white. But, go on; I find I'm bound ter keep stickin' in my lip."

"Well, he done say 'Good-ebenin', Johnsing,' as cold as er soda-founting, an' den he done turn his back to me an' talked ter Chloe like er streak ob lightnin'."

"An' then you kem away, eh?"

"Yes, den I done come away. Ef I had stopped dar two minutes I would 'a' killed dat nigger, shua."

"It looks like a hopeless case, Marcellus, hang me if it don't," Billy reflected. "If I could lend ye my jaw-tackle an' some o' my cheek, I'd do it willin'ly."

The reader may begin to think Billy had suddenly forgotten all about his detective work; but, not so; he had an object in view when he accompanied the darky.

What that object was will soon be revealed.

"Lawd! I only wish I did have your chin," exclaimed Marcellus, wistfully. "But, Billy," he added, "what be you doin' way up here? Ain't you polishin' leather no mo'?"

"Oh! I'm jist takin' a little stroll fer my health," Billy responded. "I am in business now, an' am out collectin'. Say, though, Marcellus, I believe that I kin help you on a little in yer love affair, if ye'll allow me to."

"Golly! d'y'e think so?"

"Yes."

"Lawd! but—Pd be most pow'ful glad if you would. What kin you do?"

"I believe I kin cut out that Bob White, an' give you a clear deed to th' claim."

"If you could only do dat, Billy, I would do anything in de world fer you."

"Well, I won't do it fer nothin', you kin bet."

"Name your price, den. Golly! I'll done give you a month's wages, an' more too."

"I don't want money at all, my black-an'-tan friend, not a cent."

"What den you do want, eh?"

"Information."

"Lawd! jest ax what yer wants ter know, Billy, an' I'll done tell ye."

"Well, I don't want ter know much. Be ye ready?"

"Yes; fire away."

"Well, first-off, then, who is it lives in the house you jist kem out of?"

"Mr. Jarius Rodman done live dar."

"Rodman! ain't that th' name of th' man you work fer? Is that where you live now?"

"No, I don't live dar; dis man am de son ob Noah Rodman. Old Noah he done live at No.—G—street."

"Oh! that's th' how of it, eh? I Noah little more'n I did, but I don't know enough yet. Who is th' young man that went into th' house afore you kem out? I don't mean th' country-man, but t'other one."

"Dat am Owen Rodman, son ob Jarius."

"An', Owen ter that, consequently th' grandson o' Noah. Jest so. An' now, who was th' country-lookin' chap?"

"His name am Josiah Green. He is a cousin to Owen, nephew to Jarius, an' also a gran'son ob Noah."

"Bully! Now I'm gittin' right onto th' facts o' th' case."

"What for you want to know so much?" Marcellus questioned.

"What fer? Bless yer soul, Marcey, infermation is bread an' meat ter me! I allus like ter know facts. 'Sides, I'm in biz now, an' I must keep my eye open fer customers. If any o' yer folks wants a knife, er a comb, er a watch-key, er anything else in my line, jest send 'em ter me."

"Lawd! has you really done got a corner stand at last?"

"Bet yer life I have! Have ye jest got it through yer wool? Me an' Skinny is reg'lar business men now, you bet! But, what took you up ter Jarius Rodman's house?"

"Old Noah done sent me. You see he am purty old, an' I guess he won't live long. He sent me ter tell Jarius an' de boys ter come an' see him dis ebenin'."

"Ah! good enough! Reckon I'll be— Say, mebbe th' old man is goin' ter make his will, th' reason he wants ter see 'em."

"No, he's done made dat already. He is pow'ful rich, is Noah, an' he's goin' ter leave it all to Owen an' th' countryman."

"Oh-ho!"

"He's a queer old man, an' I done heard de old servants sayin' he had first willed everything to his son Jarius. Den he done change his mind, burned dat will, and den made a new one, leavin' all to de two boys, share an' share alike. It 'pears de country boy's mother had married 'gainst his wishes, she bein' his daughter, an' he done fire her out without a cent. Now he's done turned sorry, an' she bein' dead, he gives her share to de boy. An' all de old servants say he's done jest right, too. Ye see—Hello! here's my car, though! Be ye goin' down my way?"

"I am, my huckleberry, you kin bet yer life," Billy answered.

And the pair got aboard.

CHAPTER VI.

BILLY TAKES A BIG CONTRACT.

"SWEET pertaters, wash-tubs, hair-pins an' molasses! ef this aiut growin' jest a leetle interestin'!"

So exclaimed Broadway Billy, in a mental whisper as it were, intended only for his own private ear, as he followed his colored friend into the car.

"That Jarius Rodman ain't no saint, an' I'll bet my socks on it; an' if th' old man Rodman—Moses, Adam, er whatever his name is—has jest been cuttin' him off an' willin' his spondulix ter Josiah Green, I'll bet he don't feel none too friendly to'rds th' said Josiar."

Thus Billy mused, and continued:

"No sir-ee! an' th' Josiar aforesaid had better keep his top peeper open fer rocks ahead, by genger! Th' look that old Jarius cast upon him when he was a-p'intin' him out ter Tony Duke, wasn't no look o' love, if appearances goes fer anything, an' I reckon they does. I anchor my faith onto appearances, every time. An' if there is any feller around here who kin 'scent th' battle from afar, any furder'n I kin, when there's a consarned diffikilty a-brewin', I'd like ter meet him. I am beginnin' ter have full faith in my senses o' sight an' smell, sure pop."

There were only a few persons in the car, and Billy and Marcellus sat down near the forward end.

"So that's th' lay o' th' land, is it?" Billy remarked, interrogatively.

"Yes, dat's de way it is," Marcellus responded, "dat's why I am here. I s'pose de old man wants to see his gran'sons, 'specially de country feller. Lawd! ain't he full o' hayseed, though."

"He is, fer a fact. He's Green by name, an'

green by nature too. It's a wonder ter me why them country fellers will venture inter th' city. Why, if Josiar hadn't that friend o' his ter look out for him, he'd git taken in an' done for afore he's been here a week. How long has he been here, d'ye know?"

"I done hear said he come yesterday."

"He did, eh? Well, he'd better make his visit short an' sweet, and strike fer home ter-morrer."

"Why?"

"Cause, as I said, th' city ain't no place fer him. A countryman in th' city is about th' greenest thing I kin think of. He generally thinks he's rip-stavin' smart, an' it is generally his rip-stavin' smartness that gits him inter diffikilties. A city feller out in th' country isn't half as bad off as a country feller in th' city; an' why th' latter will venture inter th' jungles is somethin' I can't understand, unless they come jest ter show how brave an' smart they are. This Josiar, though, isn't as bad as some I've seen. He does seem ter have a *little* hoss sense about him, green as he is. Say, though, how did Jarius take it when th' old man broke th' nose o' his expectations?"

"Well, I wasn't present in the room when de new will was made, Billy, but one ob de old servants who was, said that he took it easy-like, an' agreed that de old man was doin' de right thing."

"Did, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, that sort o' stumps me. I'd ruther you'd said he stormed around an' raised th' merry Old Ned fer awhile."

"Why, what sort ob difference could it make to you?"

"Oh! none at all; only I like ter see plenty o' red fire an' blue lightnin' when there's a dramatic p'int in the scene. If Jarius had got right up an' howled, frinstance, it would 'a' made it more thrillin'."

"Yes, I s'pose 'twould."

"In course it would. Say, though, Marcellus, you said you went up ter tell Jarius an' th' two young fellers ter call down an' see old M'thoozerum—"

"He, he, he!" laughed the darky, "dat ain't his name; his name am Noah."

"Well, I knowed it was one o' them old-time fellers, anyhow. You went ter tell 'em ter call down an' see him this evenin', I think ye said."

"Yes, dat am it."

"An' what word did Jarius send back?"

"Why, he done spoke to de young men an' axed 'em ter go, an' den told me ter tell de old man dey'd be dar."

"O. K. I jest wanted ter be sure o' my ground. What else did they have ter say?"

"Nothin' in 'tie'lar, fer I kem right out soon's I got th' reply."

"Does Jarius seem ter like th' young man from th' country?"

"Well, yes, he seem to, Billy; but once I see him look sort o' mad-like at him when th' young feller wasn't lookin'."

"Ha! I like ter hear that. It shows up dramatic biz, wi' red fire an' so forth. It suits my ideas o' th' case jest to a dot. Looked 'mad-like,' did he?"

"Shua."

"All right, I'll jest remember that as I jog along. I smell that diffikilty worse'n ever, now, an' if there is any crooked game about ter be played, they kin count me in. I'll block it, if it takes all th' buttons off. I'll—"

"What in de world you done sayin'?" demanded Marcellus, as he listened in surprise, trying in vain to comprehend Billy's meaning.

"I was thinkin' 'bout you an' Chloe Frost," the boy explained instantly, "an' I think we kin play against Bob White an' block him out as slick as grease. We kin give him p'ints ter start with, an' then we kin wax th' stuffin' out o' him. He won't stand no show at all when I set my will a-goin', you bet. Oh! Chloe is yours, Marcey, sure pop."

Marcellus grinned broadly.

Billy had taken his thoughts away from the object of his devotion for the time, and he had forgotten all about the boy's promise to assist him.

"Jingo!" he exclaimed, "you did promise to help me, shua. I was so interested in tellin' you 'bout de Rodmanses, dat I done fergot all 'bout it."

"Well, I didn't, ye see."

"No, dat am so. Is you done axin' me questions now?"

"Yes, I guess so. If I think of any more I kin go fer ye ag'in."

"All right. An' now how you gwine ter help me out wi' my Chloe?"

"Well, le's see. Seems ter me I had an idee in view, but what was it? Le's see. Where did we leave off? What did I say, anyhow?"

"You seems ter be pow'ful short o' memory, Billy; what am de matter?"

"Fact is, Marcellus, I've got my head so full of a consarned diffikilty, that I can't get my thinkin'-machine settled down ter other things. If I wasn't so bent on puttin' my nose inter other folks's business, I'd no doubt have less on my mind. But, I was born jest so, an' I can't see as it's my fault. D'ye think it is?"

"Lawd, Billy, I knows what you is sayin', but hang me if I knows what you is talkin' 'bout. You done said ef I would answer some questions you would help me ter get de bulge on Bob White an' win my Chloe. You ain't goin' back on what you said, is you?"

"Me go back on what I say? Nary a time! When Broadway Billy says he'll do a thing, he'll do it if it takes a leg. An' that's what I say now. If there's any sort o' p'izen crook-game about ter be played, they jest want ter count me in ter block it. That's th' idee, by ginger! I'll make old— Say, I'm talkin' 'bout Chloe, ye know. I mean ter say I'll make Bob White drop her like a hot ladle o' mush, sure pop. Sweet pertaters, yes!"

"Bully boy! An' now tell me how you's gwine ter do it."

"Well, le's see: It seems your main diffikilty is bashfulness, with a lack o' nerve to tell that walnut-stain damsel that ye love her, an' want her ter marry ye; that it?"

"Y—es, Billy, that am jest it."

"Ez I said, then, I'm sorry I can't lend ye my jaw-tackle. If I could, it seems ter me ye'd orter be able ter git over that knotty p'int in no time er tall. Bein' as I can't, I must do th' next best thing."

"An' what am dat?"

"Why, I'll have ter go an' spark th' chromo fer ye."

"Sho! you's jokin'!"

"Am I? Well I reckon not."

"You don't mean ter say dat you will go an' spark Chloe in my place?"

"Why not? If you kin think of any better plan, jest name it. You want th' gal, an' ye hain't got th' nerve ter tell her so. What's th' result? Bob White wants her too, an' if some-thin' ain't done mighty soon, accordin' ter what you say, he's goin' ter git her. Hence, you've got ter spark th' gal by proxerty, er lose her. See?"

"What am 'by proxerty'?"

"Sweet pertaters! I'm 'fraid ye stump me now. If I had my Webster's Under-th'-bridge with me, I'd be able ter give ye th' full hist'ry an' meanin' of every word in th' language, from ginger ter snuff. I most allus carry it in my vest pocket, but I guess I must 'a' left it home on th' pianner."

"He, he, he!" laughed the darky, I see you's de same Billy you used ter be."

"Reckon I am, fer a fact. But that don't answer yer question. You want ter know what proxerty means. Well, frinstance, if you send me ter spark Chloe Frost fer you, you'll be sparkin' her by proxerty. It won't be very satisfyin', I should say, but if I kin win th' prize fer ye, I s'pose it'll be jest th' same."

"Oh! Billy, if you could only do it! But, surely you's only jokin'. Would you really have de nerve to go an' see my Chloe?"

"Hold on, Marcey; I guess from what we've said she's Bob's Chloe at present, ain't she?"

"Oh! hang Bob! But, do you mean jest what you says, or is you pokin' fun at me?"

"Marcellus, I mean what I say! I vow that I speak but th' truth! Come wheels, come wagons, live er die, I vow that Chloe Frost shall be thine!"

"An' when will you 'tend to it?"

"Jest as soon as circumstances will adjust themselves so as ter admit. I— Say, though, don't you git out here?"

"Sure nuff!" the darky exclaimed, and they both left the car.

After some further talk, then, in which Billy assured his colored friend over and over again that he would assist him in his love dilemma, on condition that he would always be ready to do a favor in return, they parted.

"Sweet pertaters, whalebones, ham-fat an' carpet-tacks!" Billy exclaimed, "I reckon I've got my hands about full. Not only have I got this consarned diffikilty o' th' Rodman family ter sift out, but I've taken th' contract ter go an' court a colored gal by proxerty. Lordy! if I hadn't met an' got away with serious diffikilities afore now, I reckon I wouldn't have much hopes o' gettin' there this time. Wonder how I'll come out?"

CHAPTER VII.

TONY DUKE APPEARS AGAIN.

BROADWAY BILLY had certainly met with a remarkable piece of good-luck.

His meeting his darky friend had given him, as he expressed it, "more information than I could 'a' hunted up in a week."

Now he had a fairly clear understanding of the case he had taken in hand.

Not only had he learned the names of the parties concerned, but a good deal of their family history as well.

"Well," the boy decided, half aloud after he had considered what he should do next, "I don't reckon there's much o' anything fer me ter do jest at th' time bein', so I guess I'll take a run down an' see how Skinny is makin' out. There's no sort o' use o' my goin' back to th' Rodman dom'cile at present, fer I can't learn any more'n I know now, 'tain't likely. I couldn't very well go in an' ax 'em fer p'ints, an' 'tain't likely they'd come out an' give me any; an' as ter goin' there ter gaze at th' grim front o' th' house, that would be ruther tiresome, I reckon.

"No, 'tain't no sort o' use. After I've seen Skinny, though, an' had some supper, then I'll wander up 'round where old Adamer Moses, er Jonah, er what-ever-his-name-is—Rodman lives, an' there I'll lay fer Jarius an' th' young fellers ter come down. I have an idee that there won't be much o' a stir in th' case ter-night, but a feller can't most allus sometimes tell, an' there's no knowin' what may turn up."

Having decided what to do, Billy lost no time in doing it, and twenty minutes later found him at his place of business, the corner stand.

"Hello, Skinny!" he exclaimed, "how is biz with ye?"

"Bully!" his partner responded. "It'll beat yesterday all holler!"

"Ye don't say!"

"Don't I? I reckon I do, then."

"What ye been sellin'?"

"A little o' everything, an' more besides. I sold th' biggest corjen we had in th' ranch."

"The biggest what?"

"Corjen."

Billy was at sea, as he might have put it, and could not see the point.

What in the world was a "corjen?"

After looking at his partner for a moment in silence, he said:

"Skinny, ye stump me this time, fer sure. I know it isn't easy fer fat folks ter say hard words, words that takes a good deal o' jaw-room an' lots o' wind, but after you've rested fer a brief second er two, I wish ye'd whisper that word ag'in. I wasn't aware that we'd set up a museum o' nat'omy, nor yet a museum o' nat'ral hist'ry, nor nothin' else in that line; an' what 'a carjen' is, I can't understand."

"I said a-corjen, a-kor-gen; can't ye ketch on?"

"No, hang me if I kin. I know what ye said— a corjen; but what is a corjen?"

"Lord! don't know what a-corjen means! I mean one o' them things, them things right there," touching an accordion with his finger as he spoke; "d'ye know now what it is?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Billy, "no wonder I couldn't grip th' drift o' yer meanin'! Why, Skinny, that ain't what them things is called; they're 'African bag-pipes,' er 'coon pianers.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it makes no diff what you call 'em, that's what I sold, an' the biggest one we had, too."

"Glad ter hear it! Who did ye sell it to?"

"Give er guess."

"What's th' matter wi' ye! How d'ye s'pose I kin guess who bo't it? I might jest as well try ter guess who is goin' ter be th' next President."

"Oh, but it was somebody you know, er least-wise I think ye do."

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, "I know piles o' folks in this little town, an' how d'ye s'pose I kin guess what one o' em is taken ter moozie? I—"

"Oh! well, I'll tell ye: It was that coon that used ter be down in the hotel—Bob White."

"Sweet pertaters!"

"What's th' matter now?"

"Ye don't mean ter say you sold one o' them things ter Bob White, an' th' biggest one at that, do ye?"

"Sich is th' fact."

"Great p'izen! I wish he'd bought it at some other shop; I do, by ginger!"

"Why? You must be crazy, ain't ye?"

"No; I ain't as crazy as I look."

"Ye've got somethin' ter be thankful fer, then."

"Look out what ye're sayin', er I'll pitch inter ye? I don't know but I would anyhow, if

you wasn't so fat. If I was ter hit ye one, ye might never git yer wind back ag'in."

"Say, though, why d'ye wish Bob had bought th' a-corjen somewhere else?"

"Cause he's my rival in love!" cried Billy, clapping his left hand to his heart and clutching his hair with his right.

"Cause he's your what?"

"My rival in love."

"Oh! git out!"

"Skinny, it's a fact."

"It's some o' your foolishness, more like, I think. Every time you get th' detective fever on you, there's no countin' fer what ye'll say an' do. I s'pose ye foller'd that country feller till he kicked ye, an' then ye let him go. That's no reason why ye should come here an' tell me sich ghost yarns, though."

"Skinny, ye wrong me; ye do indeed. I really didn't think it of ye. Ye've hurt my feelin's worse'n ye may think. I don't keer how much fun ye make o' my detective work, fer I begin ter realize how sorry a figger I do cut in that line; but ter think that I'd come here an' tell you a right up-an'-down fib— Oh! it's too much, too much. Behold! I weep."

"Oh! come off! You make me tired."

"Can't help it, Skinny; I'm tired myself. Ter think that I've been an' took th' contrack ter cut Bob White out from th' fections o' his best gal, an' ter think that he's been here to our own stand an' bought a corjen—as you call it, no doubt ter sarynade her— It's too bad."

"Go on, Billy; mebby you know what ye're talkin' about, but I don't."

"It hain't ter be expected of ye, Skinny. I allus makes allowances fer yer heft o' body an' lightness o' brain, so I'll have ter give ye th' case in plainer talk an' easy words."

"I wish ye would."

"Well, mebbe ye remember Mr. Marcellus Johnsing, Esquire."

"You bet!"

"An' also Miss Chloe Frost."

"Sure."

"An' likewise Bob White. Well, Marcey an' Bob is both after Chloe, an' Bob has th' inside track. Marcey is as bashful as ever, an' don't seem ter git there worth a cent. Of th' pair, though, he's th' best nigger, an' th' one that would make th' best match fur th' gal. He's honest, an' he ain't lazy, an' that's more'n kin be said o' Bob. Well, I've jest seen Marcellus, an' I hit a bargain with him. He's done me a favor, an' in return fur th' said favor I'm ter go an' court Chloe fer him, win her chocolate-white hand, an' cut Bob out clean. See?"

"Ye don't mean it?"

"Don't I? Well, I reckon I do, then."

"Then you've got the gall of a female book-agent, an', from all 'counts, they've got lots of it."

"Don't know ary female book-agent, an' consekently don't know nothin' about 'em; but I reckon I've got my share o' th' article ye mention. But now ter turn ag'in' Bob, when he's come ter our shop ter spend his money, don't seem jist fair."

"Yer seem ter fergit th' time he kicked ye, don't ye?"

"No, I don't; an' I reckon he remembers th' poke he got in th' eye about two seconds later, too. But that is an old 'count, an' th' books is closed."

"An' ye say Marcellus has done ye a favor?"

"Sure; an' a big one, too."

"What is it?"

"Why, he's workin' in th' house where th' old granddad o' that countryman lives, an' I've got th' hull fambly hist'ry, from B ter beeswax, almost."

"An' on condition that you'd help him out in his love affair, eh?"

"Jest so."

"Then you're bound ter do it. That's th' way we've started biz, ye know; fair an' square dealin', an' allus live right up ter what we say. You can't git out."

"Oh, I don't know's I want ter git out of it, very bad; only it don't look jest th' square thing."

"Well, don't let it worry ye. I did th' tradin' with Bob, ye see."

"Yes, that's so."

"An' you say Marcey is th' best nig."

"So he is."

"Then stick ter yer bargain wi' him. At th' same time, ef I kin sell Bob any more a-corjens, I'll do it. All is fair in love, war an' biz, as I've heard you say often enough."

"Oh, you're right, Skinny; there ain't no doubt about it. An' now let's come ter biz. Be you willin' ter run this shop alone fer a day er two, an' mebby three, while I nose around ter

help Mr. Josiar Green out of a consarned diffikilty that I have an' idee he's gittin' inter?"

"Yes, cert; but who is Josiar Green?"

"Why, that young country feller, ye know."

"Oh, I see! An' that's one o' the p'ints ye got from Marcellus, hey? Yes, I'll tend to th' biz, of course, if ye kin trust me."

"An' I'll do that. I know it'll be a little hard fer ye, you bein' so fat, but I'll do jest th' same fer you, some time."

"Oh! that's all right. But can't ye let a feller onto th' facts o' yer new case? Is it anything like yer boodle case, or th' other big one ye had?"

"No, 'tain't like 'em at all. But you go an' git yer supper, an' when ye come back I'll tell ye all about it, an' then I'll be off."

Skinny agreed, and was soon gone.

When he came back, Billy told him all about the affair, an' then proceeded to don a semi-disguise. Stepping into the inclosed part of their establishment, he put on his old bootblack suit, caught up his box—which he had put away for just such an emergency as this, and was ready for the street.

"How do I look, fatty?" he asked, as he stepped out.

"Look like biz," Skinny responded.

"An' that's what I want ter look like. I wouldn't give a button fer a feller that don't look like biz once in a while. Well, now I'm off; an' if I don't make old Jarius dizzy, an' block his little game, an' scrape th' acquaintance o' Inspector Br— Hello! hang me if here ain't Tony Duke! Now then fer biz."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I'LL BE YER WING-HEELED MERCURY!"

SURE enough, Tony Duke had just come out of the hotel, which has been before mentioned as standing a short distance from where the two boys had their stand.

Chancing to glance in that direction as he was taking leave of his partner, Skinny, Billy caught sight of him.

Tony was now alone, and in his hand he held a piece of paper, which he was looking at as he came out.

Nodding a final good-by to Skinny, Billy slipped out of their curbstone store and sauntered down to where Tony was standing.

Tony Duke was something of a sport and a good deal of a rascal.

He was always well-dressed in the latest style, always seemed to have plenty of money, and never seemed to have anything to do.

He was a "sharper," one of those fine-appearing, silver-tongued rascals who are ever on the lookout to fleece some unsuspecting victim who happens to come in their way.

But Tony was not generally known for what he really was.

He moved in a good circle of society, belonged to one of the many fashionable clubs, and the doors of many of the houses of the best families were open to him.

Broadway Billy, though, knew him for his true worth.

The young bootblack was a keen observer, and judging Tony by the company he sometimes found him with, he had long since "sized him up."

Moving down toward where the sharper-sport was standing, Billy attracted no attention, and in a few moments was quite near to him.

Tony had now stepped out to the curb in front of the hotel.

Billy was behind him, and near the hotel entrance.

"Readin' a tellygram, sure's smoke," the boy mentally commented. "I know it's a tellygram, 'cause he's got th' yaller envelope in t'other hand. Yes, an' there it goes!"

Tony at that moment had cast the crumpled envelope away from him, and now sauntered back into the hotel, tearing the telegram into pieces and scattering the fragments away just as he entered.

"Here's luck, an' oceans of it!" exclaimed Billy; and glancing after Tony to see that he was not looking, he made haste to pick up the envelope and the other pieces.

In a few moments he had them all.

A glance at the envelope showed him that it was addressed to "Mr. Tony Duke," at the hotel.

Throwing that away again, he turned to the torn-up telegram it had contained.

The sport had not torn it more than twice each way, so it was not a great deal of work for Billy to match the pieces so that he could read it.

In a few minutes he had accomplished the

task, and had the telegram spread out before him on his box, where it required the service of all his fingers, as he sat on the lower step of the hotel entrance with his box between his knees, to hold it.

The message was dated from an uptown office, and read as follows:

"To TONY DUKE, at the — Hotel,
City:—

"Not to-night. Will see you again. J. R."

"That's all kerrect," said Billy to himself, as he stuffed the fragments of paper into a pocket and got up; "it ain't ter be supposed it would be ter-night, whatever it is, since old Aaron—er Jacob, er Abel, er Tobias, er whatever-his-name-is—Rodman has sent fer Jarius an' th' boys ter come an' see him. Whatever th' skeem was, th' old man has knocked it inter th' head fer ter-night.

"I tell ye there's a consarned diffikilty a-brewin', an' I know it. That was jest what I paused ter remark when I first spotted old Jarius a-p'intin' Josiar Green out ter Tony, an' th' facts that I've stumbled onter sence seems ter go ter prove it. Now if I had a supply o' brains like other folks, I'd know jest what ter do. Wonder if Skinny wouldn't lend me his, if I run back an' ax him? Put his an' mine both inter th' same head, an' it might make a sort o' fair-to-middlin' boy o' one of us. Reckon he'll want ter use th' little he's got, though, so I'd better not bother him about it.

"Well, what's ter be did? I don't s'pose it'll do me any good ter lay round here to watch Tony, seein' as he's not goin' ter do anything in th' game ter-night. I guess I'll stick to my first idee, an' meander up ter where old Isaac—er Solomon, er Abraham, er Daniel—Rocman lives, an' lay low fer Jarius. Mebby I'll be able to pick up a pint er two, an' mebby a whole quart er a gallon, o' information. There's a pun there, if I had time ter look it up, which I haven't. How much is a quarter a gallon, anyhow? Well, I must git—Hello! sweet pertaters!"

A hand laid suddenly on Billy's shoulder caused the first exclamation, and when he glanced quickly up and found that he was in the grasp of Tony Duke, the second one instantly followed.

Billy was greatly surprised, as may be supposed, but it took him only a moment to recover his perfect *sangfroid* of manner.

"Want er shine, mister?" he demanded, as he swung his box around.

"Yes," Tony answered.

"Put up yer hoof, then," cried Billy, as he put down his box and prepared for business in his old-time way.

Tony did so, and the boy set to work.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed in his mind, "but I got collared, didn't I! I had an idee that I was out o' this biz fer good. It seems I ain't, though. Ginger! but I thought I was collared fer pickin' up that tellygram an' readin' it. Thought I'd got my mammy's best boy inter a scrape, sure. That would 'a' been a—Hello! did you speak ter me, sir?"

Tony had spoken, interrupting his meditations.

"Yes," the sharper-sport owned; "I asked if your name isn't Billy?"

"It is, fer a fact," Billy answered.

"I thought so."

"Yer did? What made ye think so, if ye wasn't sure?"

"I have heard you called Billy."

"Then ye'd orter known that was th' name I'm generally called ter dinner by."

"Yes, but I wanted to be quite sure. You boys of the street all look alike, or nearly so, to a casual observer."

"Do we? Now, there's where I don't 'gree with ye er tall. There's my pardner, Skinny, frinstance; he's quite remarkable fer his fatness. Why, if ye was ter see him an' me standin' together in the sunshine, ye couldn't obsarve but one shadder. Fact, I 'sure ye."

Tony smiled.

"I will take your word for it," he said. "I have never paid any attention to the matter, so do not know. I think you have blacked my boots before, have you not?"

"What gives ye that idee?"

"I think I can recall one or two occasions when a very talkative boy has performed the office for me."

"Like as not," asserted Billy, "but I can't say fer sure."

"You can't? Why, I should think you would remember a customer, in order to catch him again if chance offered."

"So I do, if he happens ter be a solid man

o' biz, sech as a merchant 'er a Wall-street banker; but you dude fellers all looks so much alike ter a careless obsarver, that I can't be sure whether I've ever shined ye afore er not. H'ist yer other trotter, now."

Billy had got in the shot just where he wanted it.

Tony was for the moment speechless.

Without a word, he put his other foot upon the boy's box, and Billy went right on with his work.

"Say," Tony presently remarked.

"Well?" from Billy.

"Didn't I see you 'tending that stand up there on the corner only a day or two ago?"

"Jest as like as not."

"Have you lost the place?"

"Noap."

"Then why have you returned to blacking boots?"

"Cause, ye see me an' my pardner owns that stand, an' when biz ain't as lively as we think it orter be, one of us goes out an' does up a few shines, in order ter keep th' books standin' on th' side o' profit all the time. See?"

Billy knew Tony Duke well enough, and of course knew that Tony knew him. It was no use trying to deny his identity, and the same with Tony. He knew that Billy had often before given him a "shine," and therefore must know him, by sight, at least.

"Say, my lad," he presently questioned, "I suppose you know my name? Let us drop our little warfare of words, and talk business."

"Shouldn't wonder if I did," Billy replied, as he put the finishing touch to the "shine."

"Well, what is it?"

"Tony Duke, as I've heard ye called."

"That is my name. And now I want to tell you something."

"All right, let her go. I'm all ears, as th' jackass said."

"Well, pay attention, then. I did not stop you here particularly to get a 'shine,' but because I wanted to get hold of you for another reason."

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy thought, "it is about that tillygram, after all!"

"Yes," Tony went on, "I have a little job for some wide-awake lad to do, and I want you to do it."

"All right; I guess we kin come ter terms," assured Billy. "First, though," he added, "jest pass over th' nickel fer that shine. It might slip our minds when we git inter other matters, an' my terms is strickly cash on th' spot. There, that's it; now I'm open ter 'posals."

"You're a keen one, and no mistake," Tony observed, with a laugh.

"Oh, no, I ain't!" Billy denied; "my head is thicker'n a lasses bar'l. But, what's th' skeem ye've got fer me ter go inter?"

"Do you know where the Sailors' Snug Hotel is, down on Water street?"

"I've seen th' den," Billy admitted.

"Will you take a note down there for a man who is there?"

"If there's bullion in th' job, I've no objections."

"I will give you half a dollar."

"I'm yer gooseberry, sure pop!"

"Very well. Just wait here a moment while I step into the reading-room and direct the note."

"All right, an' then I'll be proud ter be yer wing-heeled Mercury fer th' time bein'."

CHAPTER IX.

SIGNS OF DANGER FOR BILLY.

"SWEET pertaters, dispensaries, hosspittles and morgues!"

Broadway Billy thus exclaimed as soon as Tony Duke was out of sight, and, as he uttered the words, he flung his box to its place over his shoulder, thrust his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, and whirled himself around on one heel.

When he came to a stop he stuck out one foot, with the toe of his shoe pointing skyward; opened his hands wide, with his thumbs still under his vest near his shoulders, smiled a broad, deep smile, and again exclaimed:

"Sweet pertaters!"

And then he continued to exclaim for some moments, in his half-whispered way:

"Skeeters from Jersey! but this is a rich old go. If I ain't right in th' swim o' luck in this case, I never was. Why, it seems ter me my star must be right up in th' sky now, for sure. Never had sich a streak o' luck since I got well o' the mumps. First-off I happen ter see a country feller, an' sell him a knife. Then I see a old gent a-p'intin' th' same feller out to Tony Duke an' one o' his tools. Then I take up th'

trail. I fall in wi' Marcellus Johnsing, Esquire, an' from him I git all th' p'ints as ter who is who an' what is what. Then I tumble to th' racket. Then comes Tony ag'in, readin' a tillygram. I git a chance ter read it too. It is from 'J. R.'—Jarius Rodman, o' course. It says 'not ter-night.' Now Tony wants to pass th' word along ter his man, an' may I be tickled if he hain't come an' gaged me ter do it! Ha, ha, ha! Why, it's the best joke out! It is gist 'bout equal ter his takin' a dose o' p'izen, it is, fer him ter put me onto any o' his games. Guess the sport don't know Broadway Billy quite as well as some other fellers does. Oh! it makes me smile all over!"

Billy was indeed having rare good luck, but the luck was destined to turn the other way before he became many hours older.

He waited impatiently for Tony to come out again, so that he might be off.

Presently the sharper-sport appeared.

"You say you know where that hotel is?" he again asked.

"Yes, if it hain't moved, I do."

"Well, it hasn't."

"Then I reckon I kin find it."

"All right. Now here is a letter for one Ed Kline."

"Is his name writ thar'on?"

"Yes."

"All right. I only asked 'cause I might furgit it if it wasn't, you know."

"Yes, the envelope is directed. Now you are to go to the Sailors' Snug Hotel—"

"So you said afore. I've got that part of it all—"

"Don't interrupt me. You are to go to that hotel, and there you are to inquire for Ed Kline."

"Jest so."

"You are to inquire of the barkeeper."

"Prezackly."

"He knows Ed, and he can tell you whether he is there or not. If he isn't there when you get there, you are to wait till he comes. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Then you are to give him this letter."

"Korrect. An' will there be any answer fer me ter bring?"

"No."

"All right. Is that all ye've got ter say?"

"Yes, that is all. Don't fail in this errand, and I'll perhaps give you more in the future."

"Oh, I sha'n't fail, you bet! If it is possible ter git thar, you bet I'm goin' ter do it. I'm right in th' swim, an' if I don't block th'—I mean if I don't find th' hotel aforesaid, it'll be 'cause it hain't no longer there."

"That is right. And now be off."

But Billy did not start with any degree of promptness.

Instead, he held out his hand.

"What do you want?" Tony demanded.

"I want th' slug, o' course."

"The what?"

"Th' slug—th' half er dollar. My terms is cash in advance, in a case o' this kind."

"Cash in advance! You must be crazy."

"I ain't half as crazy as I look ter be, as I recently said ter my fat paruner; an' he 'lowed I had somethin' ter be thankful fur. Mebby he's right; I dunno."

"Go on, and I will pay you when you return."

"Can't do it nohow. Here's yer letter; I guess I ain't th' lad ye want."

"Oh! well, here, take the money. Don't fail, now."

"That's biz," announced Billy, as he pocketed the coin; "an' now I'm off. Oory woory, as th' French say; which means—'I'll see ye later.' I'll find Edward, me noble Duke, er I'll bu'st."

"See that you do."

Billy started off at once, and Tony watched him until he disappeared from view.

Had he known Billy as well as he thought he did, that boy was the last person in the city that he would have chosen for such an errand.

It was by this time almost dark, and the street-lamps were all lighted.

"Now fer a little smack o' adventure ter spice th' case off with," Billy muttered, as he hastened along. "I'll be able ter make th' 'quaintance o' Ed Kline, whoever he is, an' mebby I'll git onto more o' th' p'ints o' th' case. This is a sort o' improvement on my own plan, I reckon. Sence there's nothin' ter be done ter-night, I reckon I'll be on th' right trail in *this* direction. Here goes, anyhow. Tain't likely I'll run inter any danger, bein' I'm sent by Tony, but a feller can't most allus sometimes tell, as I remarked afore. I've been inter danger afore, though, so I ain't very much skeered at th' prospeck."

Billy lost no time by the way, and in due season arrived at his destination.

The hotel was one of the very lowest order, and was in a very unsavory part of the city.

But the boy cared nothing for that.

He was too well used to the city to have any dread of dark streets, evil-reputed quarters, etc.

He arrived just as a lot of half-drunk sailors came reeling out of the saloon, or bar-room, and waiting until they had started off, he pushed upon the door and went in.

"Here, now," cried a voice, almost instantly, "this is no place for you, younker, so git right out!"

Billy looked around to find who it was had spoken, and to learn whether he was the one addressed.

He soon found out.

"Here, you!" cried the barkeeper, a big, homely, red-haired fellow, as he leaned over the bar and pointed at the bootblack; "d'y'e bear me? Git! We don't low no bootblacks in here!"

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy, "ye needn't git so huffy about it; I—"

"Git out, I tell ye!"

"Nary a git! I'm here ou biz, I am, an' I ain't ter be bluffed out of doin' it, you bet! You're bigger'n I be, I own, an' ye ain't as good-lookin'; but ye've got no more sand an' chin, an' I'mbettin' on it."

There was quite a laugh from all who heard, and the barkeeper's face became as red as his hair.

"I tell ye ter go!" he roared, as he made believe to get over the bar.

"An' I tell you I'm here on biz!" shouted Billy.

"Well what is yer biz? Come, don't fool no time!"

"If ye'd kept yer head shut till ye'd heard me orate," said Billy, "ye'd a' knowed long ago what my biz is. You red-headed fellers allus is too mighty previous, an' I reckon ye allus will be. There's no teachin' ye no manners, nohow. Now I—"

"Hang ye!" the barkeeper fairly yelled, as he picked up a heavy bottle, "now you shut up an' state yer biz instanter, er ye won't know what hit ye! D'y'e hear?"

"In course I hear! D'y'e s'pose my ears was put on jest ter add to my beauty? I reckon I kin hear as far around a corner as any one else, an' not more'n half try, either. I—"

"Look here! I want you ter stop yer chinnin' an' com ter biz! D'y'e see?"

"No, I kain't say ez I do. Ye want me ter shut up—choke myself off as it were, an' then give ye th' 'tic'lars o' th' reason why I'm here, an' so forth. It is jest onpossible, fer me anyhow, an' kain't be did. Now I—"

"See here, I want ye ter shut right up, er else come ter th' p'int. Kin ye git *that* inter yer thick head?"

"Cert; an' now ye're a-talkin' hoss sense. I've been a-tryin' ever sence I kem in, ter state my biz, but ye won't give me no sort o' show. I want ter find a gentleman by th' name o' Ed Kline. D'y'e know him?"

"Why in blazes didn't ye say so, then?"

"Sweet pertaters! have ye give me any show ter say so? In course ye hain't, an' I leave it to th' crowd."

Again the crowd laughed, and nearly all took sides with the boy.

There was one present, however, who did not, and that one, could Billy have caught sight of him, would have caused him no little alarm.

It was none other than one Sharkey Dan, a rascal whom Billy had once caused to be sent to prison for a number of years (as told in a previous story), and who was now, as his presence proved, an escaped convict.

He had sworn eternal vengeance against Broadway Billy, if he ever got a chance to get square with him, and here seemed to be his chance.

Since his escape and return to the city, he had been obliged to keep out of sight, and had made this hotel his headquarters—the proprietor being an old friend.

"Well," the barkeeper demanded, not in any better temper, certainly, "what is yer business wi' Ed Kline?"

"I want ter know where he is. I want ter see him."

"Well, he ain't here, so ye kin either do yer biz wi' me, er else git out."

"Then I'm ter stay right here till he comes," Billy announced, and he threw himself into a convenient chair, adding: "When I set out ter do a thing, I most allus does it; an' my orders is—ter stay right here till I see Ed Kline."

Just how the argument would have termin-

ated, will never be known, for at that moment the door opened, and a voice demanded:

"Who wants ter see Ed Kline?"

Billy looked up and instantly recognized the man whom he had seen in company with Tony Duke that afternoon.

"I want ter see him," he announced; "be you th' man?"

"I be, youngster!"

CHAPTER X.

BILLY HAS CAUSE FOR ALARM.

BROADWAY BILLY, had he known that Sharkey Dan, recently escaped from prison, was in that very room, would have settled his business with Ed Kline in short order, and have made his escape as soon as possible.

Not knowing it, his daring nature was sure to lead him into trouble.

Dan now wore a full beard, and was disguised as a sailor; so had Billy taken notice of him, the chances were that he would not have recognized him.

"Then you're jest my huckleberry!" the boy cried, as he produced the note given him by Tony Duke, "an' here's a note I was engaged ter bring down to ye."

Ed Kline took the note, at the same time asking:

"An' d'y'e want ary answer to it?"

"Reckon I do, if ye've got any ter send," was the terse reply.

"All right. Jest come along o' me inter th' back room here, an' I'll see what is wanted."

"Kerrect! I'm with ye, sure pop. That red-headed galoot there behind th' bar wanted ter choke me off an' fire me out, but I wouldn't have it. When I set out ter do a thing, I gen'lly do it."

"Have a keer, young feller, er I'll bounce ye out yet," the bartender warned.

"Not this eve; some other eve," was the boy's taunting retort, as he entered the rear room behind the rascal to whom he had brought the note; and as Kline shut the door, the barkeeper was swearing away regardlessly.

The rear room was but a small one, and contained only a table and a few chairs, and some empty barrels in one corner.

There was one gas-jet over the table, lighted, but turned very low.

This room was evidently a den for a little private gambling.

Ed Kline turned up the gas, drew up a chair and sat down, and then as he examined the envelope preparatory to opening it, he demanded:

"Who was it sent this, sonny?"

"Give it up," was Billy's ready reply. "That is ter say, I didn't inquire his name ner his family hist'ry, ner nothin' o' that kind, but he was a sport, an' I reckon he hangs out at th' hotel."

"That was Tony sure."

"Toney! Well I should say he was! Why, he was a reg'lar blood, an' no mistook."

"That was him, then."

"Was who?"

"Tony. But, let's see what he sez."

Tearing open the envelope, Kline spread the sheet it contained out before him on the table, and began to spell it out.

Billy soon saw that he was no reader of writing.

"Can't ye make it out?" he queried.

"Keep quiet," Kline answered; "I'll git onto th' drift of it purty soon."

"That toney feller said mebby ye wouldn't be able ter make it out right off, an' if ye wanted me to, I was ter help ye out."

"Did he?"

"Yes. I didn't say so out there, 'cause I thought mebby ye wouldn't like me to. See?"

"Good ernuff! an' ye done jest right. But, how'm I ter know ye're tellin' me th' truth?"

"Oh, I don't ax ye ter believe me; go ahead an' study it out yerself. I don't want ter read yer blame old letter; sweet pertaters, no!"

"But, if Tony said ye was ter to do it, why in course—"

"Well, in course he did, then. He said it didn't mount ter much anyhow; it was only ter tell ye that th' game was off fer ter-night with some country feller ye was ter meet, er some-thin' like that."

"Did he tell ye that?"

"Sweet pertaters! d'y'e take me ter be An-nernias, er whatever that old-time liar's name was? Go on an' figger it out; I won't have nothin' ter do with it."

"Oh, well, I guess you're all right! I don't see how ye could know anything about it if somebody hadn't told ye, an' Tony was th' only one as could tell ye. Here, read it out ter me."

"No, ye'd better do it yerself, an' then ye'll be surer ye've got it right."

"No, you do it. I was only a-tryin' ye, ter see if ye was true. Ye see a feller can't be too keeferal as ter who he trusts."

"Well, if that's th' way ye put it, all right. Hand the dokkymment over."

Kline handed the note over, and Billy, highly elated at the success of his little stratagem, read it out aloud.

It ran thus:—

"ED. KLINE:

"The game is off for to-night. There is a change of programme. I do not know what is up, but will find out and let you know. Perhaps it will be for tomorrow night, so keep straight and be ready."

"TONY."

"You see it is about like I told you," Billy commented, as he handed the paper back."

"Yes, so 'tis."

"Well, any answer ter make?"

"None as I know on, except that ye kin say all right, that I onderstan' an' will keep sober."

"All right. An' now I'll be goin'. I'll jest whisper good-night ter that red-headed rum-dispenser out there, an' then I'll— Sweet pertaters!"

The sudden interruption and the exclamation were caused by the abrupt entrance of a sailor, as he appeared to be, who came in from the hall, closing and locking the door after him.

"Ed Kline," he said, instantly, "lock that other door at once, before this young spy gits out."

"W-what?" gasped Kline as he sprung to his feet; "a spy?"

"As sure's ye're born," the new-comer assured, as he himself crossed over to the door leading to the bar room and secured it.

"An' who be you?" Kline demanded.

"I am—" And the sailor stepped forward and spoke his name in a whisper. The name he gave was "Sharkey Dan."

"Th' doost ye are!" cried Kline. "Give us yer hand! An' ye say this lad is a spy?"

"He is, for a fact; he's one o' th' sharpest detective in all New York."

"Git out!"

"I know what I'm talkin' about. This is th' boy that sent my friends Sharkey Dan an' Big Burke up th' river. His name is Broadway Billy."

Billy had been trying to recall where he had seen this man before, and now it came to him.

This was Sharkey Dan!

And then, as he recalled that rascal's dire threats, there is no denying that he felt not a little uneasy.

"Be ye sure o' that?" cried Kline, as he drew a glittering knife and grasped it firmly.

"Yes, of course I am; but *that ain't th' way ter do fer him. We don't want no blood, ye know.*"

"No, ye're right; but, if he *has* come here as a spy, he sha'n't leave the place alive!"

"That's a settled fact. He's *my* mutton, he is, an' I've got it in fer him. He won't do any more cute detective work in *this* world, you bet!"

"Seems ter me you fellers must take me ter be Inspector Brines, don't ye?" Billy demanded, coolly.

"I know who ye are, fast enough," retorted Sharkey Dan, "an' there's no use o' yer tryin' ter git out o' my hands this time. Ye've got ter die!"

"Mebby so. I've heard th' same thing said afore, but it didn't come ter pass. I'll die as hard as I kin, anyhow."

"There may be some mistake, though," said Kline. "Th' lad has jest fetched a note to me from a pard, an'—"

"An' no doubt has managed ter read it, too, an' has got onto some game ye've got on hand."

"Well, yes, he did read it fer me; but he said he was told ter do so."

"Ha, ha, ha! a likely story that is!"

"Oh, but he gev proof of it. He had some facts that he couldn't 'a' got no other way than from th' feller that sent th' note."

"Which goes ter prove that you don't know what sort o' feller he is. Why, he's jest chain-lightnin', an' if you don't want ter foller Sharkey Dan's Burke, you jest lend me a hand ter fix him."

"But you said, 'no blood.'"

"An' so I mean; but there's more ways 'n one ter kill a cat."

"In course."

"Well, here, jest lay hold o' him, an' we'll make sure o' him."

Sharkey advanced, but Billy grabbed up a chair and warned him to stand back, and for the moment he held the pair of rascals at bay.

The next moment they both sprung forward

at once, Kline catching the chair as Billy aimed a blow with it, and Sharkey catching hold of the boy.

There was a brief but useless struggle, and in a few minutes the Bootblack Bravo was securely bound and gagged.

His feet, though, were left free.

"There!" exclaimed Sharkey, "I guess we have got you now, and you kin bet you're as good as dead! If ye know any prayers, ye'd better say 'em. It won't be no trip through th' sewer this time, with a chance ter escape, but it'll be a fate sich as ye never read of in th' wildest romance. I swore I'd have my revenge, I did, an' now I mean ter take it."

"But," persisted Kline "s'pose ye should be makin' a mistake, Sharkey, an'—"

"Hush, fool! d'y'e want ter git me inter quod ag'in? Ye've let out who I am, now, an' th' boy must die, no matter who he is. But there's no mistake. Here, let's go through his pockets, an' mebbe we'll find somethin' ter set yer mind easy on that p'int."

It will be remembered that Billy had donned his bootblack garb, putting it on over his other suit, and the only articles in the pockets of the outer garments were his knife, a little money, and the fragments of Tony Duke's torn-up telegram.

These latter were laid hold of by Sharkey at once, matched together the same as Billy had matched them, and then he read the telegram out aloud.

"There!" Sharkey cried, "didn't I tell ye he was a spy? I know him, an' by the great blazes he's doomed!"

Kline again clutched his knife, and looked at Billy with blazing eyes.

It was a bad place for the boy to be in.

CHAPTER XI.

BROADWAY BILLY'S FATE.

BROADWAY BILLY fully realized the extreme danger of his position.

Aside from Sharkey Dan's hatred and threats of vengeance against him, he now knew that Sharkey would not hesitate to put him out of the way in order to retain his freedom.

Should Billy escape, back to prison Sharkey would go, as surely as the sun would rise and set.

And this, of course, Sharkey fully understood.

Billy was certainly in great danger.

Great as the danger was, though, the daring young sleuth was as cool as ever.

"Sweet pertaters!" his mind exclaimed, "but I'm in a pickle now, fer sure! This is about th' wu'st consarned diffikilt that I've lately been inter. Wonder how it'll come out? While there's life there's soap, anyhow, as th' chimby-sweep said when he kem out black; an' I reckon I'm very much alive yet, anyhow. Goodness only knows how long I will be, though, fer I reckon Sharkey means biz, sure pop. Well, let 'er rip! I reckon I'll have ter grin an' bear it. I got pitched down inter th' intarnal regions once, an' had ter crawl out through th' sewers; an' once I had ter almost burn both hands off, ter git out of a diffikilty: so I'm ready fer almost anything. While there's life there's soap, sure. Lordy! If my jaw was only free, wouldn't I talk some!"

"Look'e here, boy," cried Kline, "where did ye git that tillygram?"

Being gagged, Billy did not reply.

"He can't very well answer ye, with that handkercher stuffed inter his mouth," said Sharkey; "but then he don't need ter."

"I'd like ter know how he got it."

"It is plain ter be seen how he got it."

"Well, how did he git it, then?"

"I s'pose when this Tony Duke read it, he tore it up and throwed it away. Then th' boy has gobbed it up."

"I believe ye've hit it, sure."

"Of course I have. I don't know what game you're up to, but you kin set it down fer a fact that this boy is onto yer racket, an' if he could 'a' blocked th' game fer ye, he'd 'a' done it. I tell ye he's a terror, an' if he could live ter grow up, he'd be a rip-snorter of a detective, sure. But, he won't live ter grow up, an' that settles his fair prospects. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be too mighty sartain," thought Billy. "There's nothin' so onsartain as sartain things as is onsartain. Ez long as ye don't actually cut my throat, or go a-fishin' fer my heart with a knife er a bullet, I sha'n't give up hopes. Sweet pertaters, no!"

"How will ye do it?" Kline inquired, more ready to be led than to lead.

"I've got a plan, you bet! and one that won't make no fool-job of it, neither."

"What is it?"

"First let me tell ye how I made my escape from up th' river," said Sharkey, in a still lower voice than before.

"What has that got ter do with it?"

"It's got all ter do with it, as you'll soon see. One day a gang of us was doin' some work right clost to th' river. There was a lot o' empty bar'l's piled up near by. Burke an' me got ter talkin' bout tryin' ter cut an' run, as we often did; an' while we was a-talkin' a big excursion-boat kem down th' stream.

"If we could only git a show ter swim out an' ketch on to some boat," said I.

"But we can't," said Burke; "sides, I ain't much on th' swim."

"I am, then," said I, "an' I'd like th' chance ter try it."

"Why don't ye git inter one o' these bar'l's then," said he, "an' I'll set it rollin' down inter th' water."

"Will ye do it?" said I.

"Yes," said he, "I will; an' so it was settled.

"Now there was a sort o' out-o'-sight spot right where we was workin', an' th' guard couldn't see us only when he kem to th' end o' his beat. That was about once a minute, as they had short turns. Well, we got all ready, an' once when he turned, I stripped off my stripes, hung 'em onto a stake I'd fixed fer th' purpose, an' slipped inter one o' th' bar'l's; an' quick as a wink Burke nailed in th' head.

"When th' guard kem back he jest glanced down, seen Burke at work an' me a-standin' there half cut o' sight, as he s'posed, an' then he turned again. Jest then there was a big blast near by, an' at that minute Burke sent five or six bar'l's a-rollin', mine with th' rest. I don't know what took place there then, but I know that my bar'l went inter th' river, ker-slop! an' floated away; an' that I was almost smothered.

"Th' bar'l wasn't quite tight, an' it let in some air, an' some water, too; but th' air wasn't enough fer a cat ter live on. I stood it as long as I could, fer I wanted ter float as far away as I could afore I took to swimmin', an' then I straightened out an' forced th' head o' th' bar'l out an' inter th' water I was.

"An' I wasn't ten feet away from a big boat, th' same one we'd seen, an' I dived an' kem up alongside, caught hold o' a brace, an' so I floated all th' way down to New York."

"Great cats!" exclaimed Kline, "but that was a big 'venture. Bu' what has all that got ter do wi' this cub?"

"Can't yer see?"

"No, I can't."

"Then yer head must be thick. We will put him inter a bar'l, gagged an' bound jest as he is now, nail in th' head, an' then set him adrift in th' East River."

Billy's hair stood on end.

If this were done, it seemed sure that he was doomed.

Kline looked at Sharkey with a half-doubtful expression.

"Ye don't mean it!" he gasped.

"Yes, I do, too, and I want you to help me carry th' plan out."

"But, how kin we do it?"

"Why, easy enough! Here's empty bar'l's, right at hand, an' it won't take two minutes to put th' boy inter one of 'em."

"No; but how about gettin' th' bar'l inter th' river?"

"Oh, it can be done easily enough. I tell ye th' lad has got ter die, an' that is th' way he's got ter die. He'll soon find himself suffocated, an' then he'll float right out ter sea an' that'll be th' end of him. Come! no foolin'. It's as much your affair as it is mine."

"Yes; but how be we ter git th' bar'l out o' here? An' how be we ter git it down to th' river?"

"I'll tell ye. We'll take Jake inter th' plot, an' he kin help us out. He'll do anything when I tell him th' danger I'm in. You kin go an' find a trucker, an' Jake kin send a bar'l down ter some ship at th' docks. See?"

"That's so; an' I guess it'll work."

Jake was the bartender, with whom Billy had had the dispute.

Sharkey Dan called him into the little back room, and as soon as he had laid his evil scheme before him, the red-headed bartender exclaimed:

"Help ye? In course I will! An' I'm glad ter git in a cut at th' young imp, too. Fix him up, an' send fer yer truck, an' I'll see that th' bar'l is sent off all right."

The third rascal returned to the bar then, and Sharkey sent Kline at once in search of a truck.

"Ye'll find one somewhere down along th'

river," he said, "an' if ye give th' driver a dollar he'll come fast ernuff."

When Kline was gone, then Sharkey turned to Billy.

"Now, curse ye!" he exclaimed, "I'll pay ye up fer th' job ye did fer me. I'm goin' ter make sure o' ye this time. If ye know any prayers, ye'd better be sayin' em, I tell ye. Ye're a dead boy."

Procuring a hatchet, then, Sharkey prepared one of the empty barrels, making sure that it was a good tight one, and then he attempted to put Billy into it.

He soon found, though, that he could not do it alone.

Billy's feet were free, and he made a desperate struggle.

"Oh! well, I kin wait till Kline comes back," Sharkey said; and holding Billy down upon the floor, he sat down upon him.

In due time Kline returned with a truck, and came in.

"What! ain't he ready?" he demanded.

"No; I couldn't git him in alone," Sharkey answered. "Lend me a hand."

"Hadn't we better bind him up a little tighter? He might kick out th' same as you did."

"If he does he'll drown, sure, with his hands tied. But, git some cords an' we'll fix him better."

Kline obeyed, and in a few minutes the helpless boy was bound beyond any hopes of getting free. Not only were his hands and feet tied, but his legs were drawn up and he was bound in a sitting posture.

Then he was lifted up and placed into the empty barrel, and the head of the barrel was put in its place and securely nailed.

No time was lost. The barrel was rolled out to the waiting truck and lifted upon it.

The barkeeper gave directions to take the barrel to a certain freight pier, then, and the truck rattled away, Sharkey and Kline going with it.

By this time Broadway Billy was beginning to feel the tortures of death by suffocation. The barrel was tight, and already he had exhausted its supply of air.

No more horrible death can be imagined. Death by fire is almost to be preferred, and what Billy suffered cannot be described.

At last, about the time the truck came to its destination, for it had not far to go, a great wheel of flame seemed to burst in his brain, and he lost all consciousness.

The barrel was soon unloaded, and then as soon as the truck turned away, the two demons incarnate rolled it out to the end of the deserted pier, and on into the river, where it floated rapidly away with the tide.

CHAPTER XII.

JOSIAH GREEN'S METAL.

WHEN Jarius Rodman entered his house, in company with his son Owen and Josiah Green, he found Marcellus Johnson there with a message from his father.

This has been made known to the reader through the conversation with the darky and Broadway Billy.

As soon, almost, as Jarius had sent an answer, he said to Owen and Josiah:

"There! I forgot to send an important telegram. I must go at once and attend to it."

"I will go, father," said Owen.

"No, never mind, my boy," Jarius returned; "it is but a short distance to the telegraph office, and I can walk there while I would be writing it."

"Why not send a servant with it?" the young man suggested.

"No, no, I will go myself," the old man decided, and he put on his hat. "You and Josiah prepare for dinner," he added, "and I shall be back in a few minutes."

He started away, then, and upon arriving at the telegraph office, sent the telegram which was received by Tony Duke some time later.

Having sent the telegram, Jarius returned to his house, when he joined his son and nephew at the dinner-table.

He was more than attentive to Josiah. He seemed eager and anxious to do all that he could for his ease and comfort, as though to atone for the wrong that had been done to the country-boy's mother.

Owen could not help but notice it.

"Father," he remarked, "I see you find Josiah is a pretty good fellow, and I think he has won your regard to an unusual degree."

"You are right," Jarius declared. "I am proud of him. There is no reason why he should not remain here with us for any length

of time, and become thoroughly acquainted with city life and ways."

"You are right!" Owen exclaimed. "I was sure you would like him."

"How do you like the city, Josiah?" the old gentleman inquired.

"Fu'st rate!" the young countryman replied, as he laid a slice of bread down upon the table, spread it all over with butter, and then took a capacious bite out of it. "It is an all-fired big taown, fer sure. An' th' stores an' sich like buildin's—*whew!* Why, Bugville Corners ain't nowhere!"

"It is indeed a big city," Jarius commented, "but after you have been here a few months, you will not notice it. You will get used to everything, and will fall right into the hurry and bustle of city life unconsciously. It is a wonderful city, too. If you want to lead a life of crime, here is your field; and if you want to lead a life of honesty and uprightness, no better place is to be found. The evil way is broad and gilded, but the good way is as easy to follow, and I hope you will keep to the latter course."

Good advice, certainly.

But Jarius Rodman was playing a part. If harm comes to Josiah, it could be said that he had warned him to keep away from all evil during his visit.

"That is what I intend ter do, sir," Josiah responded. "My poor mother always told me to do to others as I would like others ter do to me, an' that is the way I intend to do at all times. Of course you do th' same, as I have no doubt."

This was a cut that Jarius felt not a little.

"Certainly, certainly," he said rapidly, and then changed the subject.

"What time shall we start for grandfather's?" Owen presently questioned.

"Oh! say half-past seven, or so," was the reply, "why do you ask?"

"Because Josiah wants me to go out with him to make some purchases. He wants to become thoroughly 'cified,' in appearance at any rate."

"You will have plenty of time for that."

"Very well; we will set out at once, and shall not be long gone."

"All right; and I will await you here."

As soon as they were through with dinner, Owen and Josiah started off.

Visiting one of the leading clothing houses, the young countryman made such purchases as his city cousin advised.

Josiah's natural taste ran to "loud" plaids and gay colors, but he yielded readily to Owen's suggestions.

When the shopping expedition ended, he had bought two suits of clothes; ditto of underwear; shirts, collars, cuffs, etc. Also a pair of low shoes; a white hat; a light, plain cane; and several other articles to complete his outfit.

The smaller articles he carried along with him, and the others were ordered home at once.

When they were all done, the two young men returned to the house, and in a short time all the purchases were delivered.

Then came the dressing-up.

"Hello!" exclaimed Owen, the moment he had adjusted Josiah's standing collar and four-in-hand tie, "here's one thing that has got to be done, or it will spoil everything else."

"What is that?" asked Josiah.

"Why you must visit a barber's and get your hair cut, and also have these whiskers shaved off clean."

Josiah wore a long, thin strip of whiskers just in front of each ear, and they were the pride of his heart.

He made his first remonstrance at the thought of parting with them.

"Those are all very well for Bugville Corners," said Owen, "and they did very well with your other attire; but they are out of place now. You look like a County Mayo Irishman."

This settled it.

Owen took him to a near-by barber's, and in a short time the defect was remedied.

Returning again to the house, Owen guided his cousin in completing his personal embellishment.

And when he had done, Josiah was a specimen of physical manhood to be proud of. Tall, broad-shouldered, straight, full-featured, sun-bronzed—he was perfect.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Owen, as he viewed his work with admiring eyes. "I did think of introducing you to my best girl, Josiah, but now I'll be hanged if I will! She would never look at me again."

"Oh! yeou git out!" said Josiah, as a blush mounted to his face.

It was a fact, though, that of the two Josiah was the better formed and better looking. In short, the "manliest man," in appearance.

By this time it was after eight o'clock, and Jarius Rodman called up to know if the "boys" were ever going to be ready.

Being all ready, the young men hastened down, and the three set out to visit old Noah Rodman, the millionaire.

On arriving there, Marcellus Johnson opened the door to them, and at his first glance at Josiah he could not repress an exclamation.

"Ginger!" he commented, as he watched the three enter the parlor, "but dat am a fine lookin' man! If I had *his* shape, I reckon I'd take my Chloe from dat low-down nigger, shua. But, neber mind, Broadway Billy is goin' ter cook his goose fer him, an' he is jest de boy ter do it, too."

This, by the way, to show that we have not forgotten Marcellus and his love dilemma.

Old Noah was in the parlor ready to receive his callers.

"Father," said Jarius, as he took Josiah by the arm and led him forward, "this is your grandson, Kate's boy."

"My stars!" the old man exclaimed, as he adjusted his glasses and viewed Josiah from top to toe, "but he's a lad to be proud of. Owen, he's *your* better, and no mistake. Young man! I'm your grandfather, and I'm proud of you! How do you do?" extending his hand.

Josiah grasped his hand and answered:

"I am first-rate, sir, and I hope you are."

The country boy could drop his drawl and twang, when he watched himself. He was fairly well educated, but force of habit and of association had left their mark upon him.

"No, I am not well," said the old man. "I am going to die."

"Gosh! I hope not, sir."

"Don't say so foolish a thing, young man. Nature only leased this poor body to me, and I must give it up when she demands it."

"I know that," said Josiah, "but I mean I hope you have many years to live yet."

"I don't!" retorted the old man. "I don't care a tin whistle if I die to-night. My day of usefulness is past, and I am prepared. Let us say no more about it. Sit down."

Josiah obeyed.

Some general conversation followed, then, and presently the old grandfather turned to Josiah, and said:

"Young man, you of course understand that I cast your mother off when she eloped with your father, and would never recognize her?" in a questioning tone.

"Yes, sir, I know all about it," the young man answered.

"I did wrong," the old man then owned. "I did a great wrong, and I am sorry for it."

"Rather a late day to find it out," Josiah boldly declared.

"You are right, my boy; but now I purpose to right the wrong as nearly as may be. You know that I am rich?"

"I have heard so."

"Well, I am. I am classed a millionaire. When I die, the bulk of all I possess shall be equally divided between you and Owen."

"I don't want it!" cried Josiah. "I won't touch a consarned cent of it!"

"You don't want it? You won't touch it?"

"No, sir! What yo couldn't give ter my poor mother ter enjoy, I don't want!"

The old man sunk back in his chair, pale and trembling, while Jarius and Owen could but look at Josiah with feelings of mingled surprise and pride.

For some minutes all were silent.

Presently the old man sat up and spoke again:

"Young man," he said, "I am more than proud of you. Did you love your mother?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And so did I. Did she teach you to dislike me?"

"No, sir. She loved you, and taught me to respect you. In her dying hour she spoke of you."

The old man sunk back with a groan.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLANNING A HEINOUS CRIME.

JARIUS RODMAN and Owen could not help regarding Josiah Green with surprise, and no little pride, as said.

There was some difference, though, in their views of his action.

Owen, noble-spirited and honest, mentally exclaimed—"Noble sentiment."

Jarius, on the other hand, thought—"The fool!"

The pride the latter felt was but a passing emotion, while with Owen it was lasting.

It was the pride that we feel naturally whenever we witness a noble deed or action or sentiment, and the degree of that pride is to be measured according to the standard of our own nobleness of heart.

All waited for the old millionaire to speak. Presently he did.

Sitting upright as before, he exclaimed:

"Jarius, are you not cut to the quick? Does your conscience not smite you? It was you who held me back once when I was on the point of sending for Kate to come to me. For me, it is like a heated dagger driven into my heart. Now, when I would repair the wrong as nearly as I can, I am denied the privilege."

"It is rather hard," said Jarius.

"Young man," asked the grandfather, "are you set in your purpose?"

"Yes," answered Josiah, "I am. Your money would burn my hands."

"Then you will deny me the chance to do all I can to undo the wrong I have done! Will you make my last hours the bitterest I have known?"

Josiah was silent.

"You see," the old man went on, "I have made my will, and I shall not alter it. The money will be yours in any case, whether you use it or not. My property is to be divided equally between you and Owen, as I said, except some trifling bequests. I cannot blame you for your stand in the matter. I have done all I can. If you still refuse to accept it, I cannot help it. It shall be yours anyway."

"If I were you I would accept it. It is rightfully yours, and he is certainly sorry for the past. Accept it, and let the poor old man be satisfied in his wish."

"But, Owen, it was denied to me—"

"There, there, that is past. Take my advice and accept it. If you don't, I shall refuse my share."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do—I swear it."

Josiah turned at once to the old man, and said:

"Grandfather, I will accept whatever you are pleased to will to me."

"Bless you, my boy; give me your hand again. I like you. I am sorry for the past, and I have done all I can to right the wrong. I wish your mother were alive and here. But, what is past is past. Bless you, my boy."

"I am glad you have come to the right conclusion," said Jarius. "My father had willed everything to me, but I am a great deal more pleased to see it go to you and Owen. I only hope you will make good use of it."

"And that I shall do, you may be sure," said Josiah, speaking deliberately, and consequently without his drawl and twang. "I shall use it in ways that my mother would approve were she alive."

"What did Owen say to you to cause you to change your mind?" asked the old man.

"I advised him to accept it," said Owen, "and I added that unless he did I would not accept my share."

"That influenced me, certainly," Josiah owned; "but now, grandfather, I accept it because I do not think it right to refuse, under the circumstances. I care nothing for the money itself, as the use I shall make of it shall prove."

"Well, let us say no more about it."

The subject was changed, and all spent a pleasant hour together, Jarius never tiring in his kindly attentions toward his nephew.

When the three finally left the house and turned toward one of the busy thoroughfares, Jarius turned to the young men and said:

"Now, my boys, I have a little business to attend to down-town. I will leave you at the corner, and you may go home or wherever you please. Owen, I leave you to look after your cousin."

"All right," assented Owen. "I guess we can take care of ourselves."

"I have no doubt of it," laughed Jarius, and so he left them.

Owen and Josiah went on and out upon one of the most populous of the many favorite evening promenades, where more than once the young countryman forgot himself and exclaimed:

"Gosh! but this is a ripper of a taown, sure pop."

But we must follow Jarius Rodman.

Going to the nearest station of the Elevated, he boarded a train and was soon quite a distance from where he had left the young men.

When he left the train he went at once to the Hotel.

Sauntering leisurely in, he looked around and soon found the person for whom he was searching.

That person was Tony Duke.

Going up to where that "gilded" rascal was seated watching a game of pool, he touched him on the arm.

Tony looked quickly up, and then the pair shook hands.

"Get my telegram?" Jarius asked.

"Yes," answered Tony, "and have passed the word on to my men."

"You are taking good care not to let out that I have a hand in it?"

"Of course I am. But this is a poor place to talk; come up to my room."

"All right."

Tony led the way and Jarius followed.

When they entered the sharper sport's room, Jarius threw himself into a chair and made himself quite at home.

He and Tony were evidently not strangers to each other.

"Well, what turned up to spoil the affair?" Tony inquired.

"Why, the young lout was called away, a call that had to be obeyed, and of course that knocked our plans in the head."

"I thought you had backed out."

"Never!"

"Then, when shall it be done?"

"Night after to-morrow night."

"Will it be a sure go then?"

"Yes, if I can make it so."

"And will the thing be worked as we arranged for to-night?"

"No; I have made a slight change in the programme."

"What is the plan, then?"

"I will tell you. First, though, let me impress it upon your mind that there must be no mistake made in the party, and that there must be no fool-work about the job."

"I will take care of that."

"And in no case must you let out that I am a party to the plot."

"Of course not."

"If you do, I will tell what I know, and you know what *that* means."

"Certainly; have no fears. But, let me hear your plan."

"Well, it is this: I shall in some way get Owen away for the evening. Then I shall propose to that clodhopper to go out with me for a stroll. I shall offer to show him some of the shadows of Gotham, and will lead him down — street. Your men will lay for us somewhere between — and — streets, and attack us. I am to be struck over the head, not very hard, mind you; and will become insensible. The lout is to be killed. Let your men make sure work of him. Then let them rob us, and leave us there. That street is deserted after nine o'clock, and the thing can be done easily enough."

"That plan is better than the first," declared Tony. "No suspicion can possibly fall upon you."

"You see the danger I run, though, in case your men make a mistake."

"That must be guarded against. We must have some signal arranged, so that there can be no mistake."

"What shall it be?"

"Suppose you carry your bandkerchief in your hand, and let it be understood that the one with the handkerchief is the one not to be injured."

"That is a good idea. Let that be the signal."

"All right."

"And for Heaven's sake be sure your men understand it. You see the risk I will be running."

"Oh! there shall be no blunder made. I will make sure of that. Speaking of danger, though, see the risk I am running. I have to deal direct with the rascals, and if they are caught and confess— Ugh!"

"But ten thousand dollars is no trifle, Tony."

"I know it; but I wouldn't handle the job for a cent less."

"I am not asking you to. You shall have that sum as soon as it is earned. That is, as soon as the job is done."

"All right. And from what you have said, I take it that you will take care of your tools after the work is done."

"Well, I should say so! Their lives will be about the worst risks any insurance company can have. They will not be with the living many moons, you may safely bet."

"And once they are removed, you will be safe to enjoy your ten thousand."

"You are right. You see I have my plan well laid, and there is little chance for the secret to leak. If I had any doubts, I would be careful to keep out of it."

"No doubt. Well, is everythin' under foot?"
Are you sure you understand my plan?"

"Yes, I understand. I will repeat it to you." "Yes, that is it," Jarius said, when Tony had done; "and now I will go. Be sure, above all things, that no blunder is made."

"I will take care of that."

This was Jarius Rodman in the true light. A rascal at heart, but enjoying the reputation of an honest, honored man, he was planning the murder of his nephew in order that his son might come into the whole of the old millionaire's property.

So the will read; in case of the death of one, without descendants, his share was to go to the other.

Jarius took his leave of his rascally hireling, and went home, where he arrived almost at the same time that Owen and Josiah returned from their stroll.

"Well, boys," he exclaimed cheerily, "had a good time? And you, my dear Josiah, what do you think of Gotham by candle-light?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A SAILOR WHO KNOWS BILLY WELL.

"SWEET pertaters!"

Broadway Billy alive!

When the daring young detective returned to consciousness, he could not realize for some time where he was nor what had happened.

He felt half suffocated, and was so stiffened and cramped that he ached all over.

He heard the sound of water, as of waves breaking against a boat, and felt a rising and falling motion that told him plainly that he was afloat.

The moment he realized this, he remembered all that had taken place.

And then it was that he mentally exclaimed— "Sweet pertaters!"

But let me hasten to explain how he escaped death by suffocation, when death seemed so near.

One minute more without air, and he would have been dead.

When the barrel was rolled over the end of the pier, and fell into the water, the sudden shock caused the bung to fly out, and the air of course rushed in.

Some water, too, splashed in, which helped to resuscitate the unfortunate lad.

The barrel righted itself at once, and floated rapidly away.

"This beats all th' fixes I ever got inter, sure," Billy's thoughts ran. "It's jest th' wu'st consarned diffikilty I ever tackled. I see th' bung has got bunged out o' my life-savin' consarn. If it hadn't, I reckon I'd been a goner by this time. Wonder how long I've been here, an' where I've drifted to? Sweet pertaters! if I float out ter sea, it'll be a mighty serious case, an' no mistakel! Wish this consarned gag was out o' my mouth, so's I could holler. Billy, ye're in a bad fix, sure."

And so he was.

The boy's danger can be easily seen.

Bound and gagged, inclosed in a barrel, and set adrift on the broad highway that leads to the ocean!

What more horrible situation could he well be placed in.

"If I git out o' this," he mused, "there'll be a mighty rattlin' amongst th' dry bones, I bet! There was no joke about this, it meant biz; an' if th' bung hadn't bunged out on' let th' atmoustfeer bung in, it would 'a' settled my biz! sure pop. Oh! I want ter git out now, th' wu'st kind o' way; an' if I do— Well, there'll be moozie in th' air, I bet! I'll go right up an' see th' Inspector, an' if I don't put him onto th' haze o' Sharkey Dan, it'll be 'cause I can't talk. But, I ain't out yet, an' th' chances is I won't be, I'm afraid. I've been inter diffikilties afore, but this one jest yanks th' puddin' fer stoopin'-jus awfulness. I acho all— Sweet pertaters!"

A passing schooner hit the barrel at that moment, and the shock almost broke Billy's neck.

The barrel was turned end over end, and more water splashed in.

As soon as it righted itself again, the young prisoner exclaimed:

"Jest what I expected! They might 'a' known enough ter hang some signal-lamps to my craft, I should think! They might 'a' known I'd git run inter! Now ain't this a pleasant state o' things? Sweet pertaters! I should think so. It's enough ter make a feller weep, an' wish he'd been born a howlin' Hottentot. Oh! let me git out o' this diffikilty, an' if I don't make somebody sick, I'm no prophet! Ginger! I guess if I don't git out, it'll be all up with my friend Josiar, fer sure. He's a good boy, is Josiar, an' I wanted ter block th'

little game o' evil they was tryin' ter work ag'in' him, an' fetch him out on top. I reckon it's all up now, though. Ye'll have ter go it alone, Josiar; my hand ain't worth shucks! I— Sweet pertaters! here's another man-o'-war!"

The barrel had received another bump, but this time it was of a different sort.

The vessel had sent it drifting toward the shore, and it had struck against one of the piers.

And there it lodged, at one side and right near the end of one of the longest piers on the East River.

The boy had not been afloat very long, and had not had time to drift far away when the vessel hit the barrel.

For aught he knew, he might have been drifting about for hours.

The sounds he heard, though, told him that he was not out of the river.

Having lodged near the end of the pier, the barrel was held there by the tide, and there it kept up a continual bumping.

An hour passed, and Billy began to despair. His position was a most uncomfortable one, and being bound, he ached from head to feet.

But help was now near at hand.

There was a ship lying alongside the pier where the barrel had lodged, and a party of sailors from it came down to the end of the pier to take a swim.

They had undressed aboard ship, and it being dark they could not be seen.

Billy heard them, and his hopes brightened at once.

Into the water they plumped, and began to dive and swim about.

Presently one of them found the barrel, and pulling it out into the stream, he rolled up onto it and dived over.

The others joined him at once.

Billy was now in danger of being drowned, and he began to groan as loudly as possible. That was the only thing he could do.

The sailors heard him, and fell away from the barrel in alarm.

"What was that?" one demanded.

"Shuro it was a warnin'," cried another, "an' one av us is goin' ter die."

Billy groaned his loudest.

"Warnin' be hanged!" exclaimed another sailor, "it is some poor devil in this bar'l!"

Billy gave two groans more.

"You've hit it," he mentally exclaimed, "an' now fer goodness sake git me out."

The sailors all swam up to the barrel, and one demanded:

"Say, is therero anybody in this barrel?"

Billy gave still another loud groan, and that settled it.

"There is somebody in here," the one sailor declared decisively, "and we must get th' bar'l out and open it. Th' rest of ye go and get a rope, and I'll swim the bar'l up to th' end of th' pier."

Eager to solve the mystery, the other sailors hastened to obey their leader, who was second mate on the ship.

He, the latter, swam with the barrel to the end of the pier, and in a few minutes a rope was thrown over to him.

It was but the work of a moment to make a secure double-hitch around the barrel, and then the mate clambered up to the top of the pier and assisted his companions in drawing the barrel up.

This was safely done.

"Let's take it right aboard, where we won't be interfered with," the mate advised, and four of them laying hold, the barrel was soon upon the ship's deck.

"Are ye still alive, mate?" one sailor asked, speaking into the bunghole.

Billy groaned in reply.

"All right; keep up your courage, and we'll have you out in a jiffy," the sailor said, and then all hastened to don their clothes.

This took but a moment. Then the mate procured an ax and knocked one end of the barrel in, and Billy was drawn out into the world of the living once more.

The exclamations of the sailors were too numerous to admit of being repeated. They were a surprised lot of men, certainly.

The mate lost no time in making the boy free, and after pouring a few drops of brandy into his mouth, and walking him up and down the deck for two or three times, asked:

"Youngster, how came ye in that fix?"

Billy attempted to reply, but for once his jaw refused to wag freely. The severe gag had made his jaws stiff.

After a moment, though, he got it into working order, and answered:

"Why, I got into a consarned diffikilty, and a couple o' fellers put me in there ter kill me."

"Well, they came near to doin' it, as I should judge. Why did they want to kill ye though?"

"Why, they was rascals, an' they was foolish enough ter think I was a spy; jest as if a kid like me could be a detective. I tried ter convince 'em o' th' error o' their way, but it wasn't no use, an' inter th' bar'l I had ter go."

"What's yer name, an' where d'ye live?"

"My name is Weston, an' live over on Center street. An' I must be cuttin' fer home, too, or my mammy will feel worried about me."

"Would ye know th' two fellers again?" one sailor asked.

"You bet I would!" Billy cried, "an' ter-morrer I'll put th' plice after 'em. I'm a free-born American cit., I am; was born right under th' shaddder o' th' big eagle's wing; an' you bet I ain't goin' ter stand no sich abuse as this, an' say nothin'! Not much! I'm on deck ag'in, as big as life; an' if I don't block th' game o'— I mean if I don't have revenge, it'll be 'cause there's no law in the land! You hear me!"

The sailors laughed heartily.

"I can't begin ter tell ye how thankful I am to ye fer snatchin' me from an' ontimely doom," Billy continued, "an' ter-morrer er next day I'll come down here an' treat ye all ter grog an' bakky till yer eyes will dance. Sweet pertaters, yes! Only for you fellers, I reckon I'd been about done fer by this time."

"We'll be glad to see ye ag'in, youngster," said the mate, "an' to know how you fix out th' rascals that served ye so bad. We'll be layin' in' here for a week or more."

"I'll be 'round then, sure, or my name ain't Broadway Billy."

"What!" cried one sailor, who was a great lover of stories, and who generally laid in a stock of reading matter at every port, "be you Broadway Billy, th' feller th' story-books tell about?"

Billy blushed to the roots of his hair.

"I didn't mean ter let out who I am," he said, "but it slipped, so I might as well own up. Yes, I'm th' same Billy."

Instantly the sailor grasped his hand, and almost shook his arm off.

"Say," he cried, "if ye'll stay aboard ye kin sleep in my bunk."

"Thank ye," said Billy, "but I can't. I must be goin' this minute. I'll come an' see ye ag'in; though, an' then I'll invite myself ter stay an' take dinner with ye. In th' mean time, please don't let it leak out that ye've rescued a feller out o' a bar'l. It might spile th' chances o' ketchin' th' villains."

The sailors readily promised; Billy returned to the dock and hastened away.

CHAPTER XV.

BILLY SEES THE INSPECTOR.

"SWEET pertaters, kangaroos, castor-oil, an' Jarsey lightnin'!"

So exclaimed Billy when he once more found himself safe out upon the street.

"Of all th' consarned diffikilties that I ever got inter," he muttered, "that one jest takes th' place at mast-head! I thought I was dead, sure pop. Ginger! I never thought what an awful thing it is ter be smothered. A feller can't live without air, no use tryin'; an' only fer that bung a-flyin' out, as I s'pose it did, I reckon I'd be a goner now. I bet I'll make Sharkey Dan sweat fer it, though! I see me an' Sharkey is sworn enemies now, an' th' longer I kin keep him in th' jug th' safer I'll be. If he ever gits a show at me ag'in, he'll make sassage-meat o' me, sure pop. But I reckon he'll stay up th' river next time he goes. There'll be no more bar'l tricks fer him, an' I hope ter goodness there won't be any more fer me. I've had a stummick full."

Billy hastened on, intending to go straight home.

He paid little attention to the route he was taking; his thoughts were too busy.

Judge of his surprise and alarm, then, when he suddenly found himself opposite to the very hotel where he had only a short time previously entered in search of Ed Kline, and where, too, he had been so foully dealt with.

He stopped, and standing in a friendly shadow, looked in through the half-open door to see if he could see his two enemies.

He was too far away, though, to be able to discern much within.

He was just about to start on, when a messenger-boy appeared from around a near-by corner, glanced about him for a moment, and then pushed open the door of the saloon and entered.

"Hello!" exclaimed Billy, "that means somethin', an' I mean ter know *what*. I'm mean enough fer anything, after th' mean way they've served me."

The messenger was gone only a few moments, and then he came out and hastened away.

"No use ter foller *him*," Billy reasoned, "fer I reckon his job is done. This hotel (a gay old hotel!) don't look like th' sort o' place ter have patent messenger-calls, an' sich. Not any! I bet— Sweet pertaters! I thought so!"

This exclamation was brought out at the boy's seeing Ed Kline suddenly appear and hasten away up the street.

"That's th' idee!" Billy added, as he at once started to follow. "Somebody has sent fer this rascal, an' ten ter one it's Tony Duke. I reckon I'm right in th' swim ag'in an' if I don't git thar it'll be 'cause my name ain't Eli; that's all."

Keeping Kline well in sight, but taking care not to be seen by him, Billy followed him through rather a winding course, and finally came out near the Post-office.

The rascal crossed over to the front entrance, and there he was joined by Tony Duke.

Then the two passed on up Broadway.

The boy followed.

When the evil pair came to the Park, they turned into it, and crossing over to the City Hall, seated themselves upon the steps.

Billy went right on up the street, till out of range of vision, and then he hastened to get near enough to the two villains to hear what they said, if possible.

Fortune favored him.

Some work was being done, in one of the city buildings, and there were several barrels, a bed of mortar, and some lumber piled up near the steps at the end where the two men had taken seats.

Moving carefully, Billy managed to crawl along beside the wall unseen, and was soon lying flat down between the barrels and the steps.

Tony and Kline had looked around these very barrels before sitting down, and, finding no one there, they were, as they believed, safe.

The first words Billy caught were spoken by Kline.

"Well," he asked, "what is the new programme?"

"I will give it to you," Tony answered, "and I want you to pay the closest attention to every word I utter."

"All right, go ahead. I reckon I kin grip it."

Tony began, and then was repeated, in every detail, the evil plot which we have seen arranged between Tony and Jarius Rodman, except that no names were given to Kline.

The reader may remember that when Jarius Rodman first pointed Josiah Green out to Tony, Kline was present. On that occasion Jarius and Tony had made no mention to Kline of their plot. Kline had been present by chance more than by appointment.

Broadway Billy kept his ears open to their widest, and caught every word that was spoken.

When the two men were about done, a policeman came along and ordered them to "move on," and as soon as they and the officer were gone, Billy crept out from his hiding-place and hastened away.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, as he fairly danced in his exultant excitement, "but I have got onto this thing in grand style! I've got th' hull skeem, now, from Generosity to Relations, an' if I don't make somebody sick, it'll be funny. I'm goin' ter block this game, I am, or bu'st!"

He went straight home.

There his mother, the apple of whose eye was he, was anxiously awaiting his coming.

She had been over to the corner stand to find out what was keeping him, and when Skinny informed her that Billy "had th' detective fever ag'in," and was "on th' scent of a mystery," she became very much worried.

Of course she was delighted to see the boy return alive and well.

Billy told her all about the case he had in hand, and the adventure he had had, to all of which she listened with bated breath.

Next morning Billy was up bright and early, and as soon as he swallowed his breakfast he hastened over to the stand to see Skinny.

Skinny was doing well, having just opened the stand for the day.

Billy relieved him for two hours or so, in order to let him go home. Then, when he came back, he again took charge, and as soon as Billy had related his adventure to him, he, Billy, set out for up-town.

He went straight to Police Headquarters.

Going in, he inquired boldly for the Inspector.

"He is in his private office," he was informed by an officer.

"Well," said Billy, "I want ter see him."

"What for?" was asked.

"That is fer him ter know."

"Well, he won't see you unless you state your business, that is sure," the officer declared.

"This is a queer old ranch, then," said Billy, in a tone of disgust. "What is th' use o' havin' a 'spector if a citizen hain't allowed ter see him? I'm here on biz, I am, an' no fool biz, either."

"Well, you will have to state it to me, or not at all."

"That's a purty how-d'y-e-do! If that's th' rule, though, I reckon I'll have ter foller it. Ever hear tell o' Sharkey Dan?"

The officer was all attention at once.

"Yes; what about him?"

"Escaped from th' jug, hain't he?"

"Has he?"

"I axed *you*; but, no matter. I know where you fellers kin go an' put yer paws right onter him."

"You do?"

"You bet I do!"

"Where is he?"

"That's th' biz I've got wi' th' Inspector. He kin see me er not, jest ez he likes."

"You wait here a moment."

"Thought that would fetch him," Billy mused, as the officer turned and disappeared into an inner room.

He soon returned.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"William Weston, sir; Broadway Billy fer short."

"Do you know the Inspector?"

"Well, most everybody has heard tell o' him, I reckon. If ye mean do I enjoy th' honor o' his personal acquaintance, though, I don't."

"So I thought. Well, he is very busy, and says whatever you have to tell, you may tell to me."

Billy was disappointed. He had hoped to get a personal interview with the Inspector.

He saw that he was in a place where business meant business, though, and he must either tell his story to this officer or leave it untold.

As a rule, Billy did not like to confide his secrets to the police, but in this case he could not help it, if he wanted to "block the game." Unaided, he could do nothing.

"Well, he said, "I reckon I'll have ter state my case ter you, then. I warn ye that I'm goin' ter put ye onto a big thing, though."

"All right, go ahead. We are used to big things here."

"Well, then, here goes."

Billy began, then, stated the whole case, just as it stood.

The officer listened attentively, and when Billy concluded, he said:

"Are you sure you have not been dreaming all this?"

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy, "mebby I'm asleep now! D'y'e think I am?"

The officer bade him wait, and again went in to the private office.

He was gone a long time, and when he returned it was to motion to Billy that he, too, was wanted.

Billy went in, and at last stood face to face with the great idol of his youthful heart.

The door closed, and Billy was severely questioned, but needless to say he stood the ordeal nobly.

"My idee," he boldly ventured, "is ter leave Sharkey alone till th' other game is blocked—nipped in the bud as it were, an' then scoop him. If ye take him fu'st, th' others may git skart off."

"Your head is level, my boy," he was answered. "Nothing shall be done in the matter until to-morrow night, when we will take care that the intended murder is not carried out."

CHAPTER XVI.

BILLY WINS A BRIDE.

BILLY went away from Headquarters highly elated.

At last he had made the personal acquaintance of the great detective chief.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed as he took off his cap and kicked it high in the air, catching it upon his head as it came down, "but I got thar, fer sure! Couldn't do nothin' else, though I like ter ketch my own game after I skeer it up. This was too big a handful fer me ter grasp, so I had ter turn it over to th' plice. It's worth a pile, though, ter have made th' 'quaintance o' th' great mogul. Whoop! now I'm happy!"

Billy went home at once.

He had no intention of visiting the corner stand again that day.

There he was likely to be seen and recognized.

Of course Kline had told Tony Duke all about suspecting Billy as a spy, and how Sharkey Dan and he had put him out of the way.

Should Tony see him alive and well, after that, it might disturb his plans not a little.

Therefore Billy resolved to keep out of sight.

He remained home all day.

When evening came, he went up to the residence of Noah Rodman.

He had not forgotten his promise to Marcellus Johnson, and having nothing particular to do, he thought this was about his best chance to attend to the case.

He was clad in his best, and it was a question whether any one who had seen him on the previous night, in his bootblack attire, would be able to recognize him now.

When he arrived at his destination, he went to the basement door and inquired for Marcellus.

He was just in time to find him.

It was the young darky's evening off, and he was just ready to go out.

Together they left the house.

"Golly!" Marcellus exclaimed, "but I's glad ter see you, Billy; I is; pow'ful glad. Is you gwine ter keep yo' word an' help me ter oust dat low-down nigger?"

"I am, Marcey, fer a fact," Billy replied.

"I don't promise ter win th' case, mind ye, but I'll do th' best I kin fur ye. At any rate, I'll give ye an idee how ter talk ter that little black-an'-tan."

"Billy, don't call her sich names; please don't. She am an angel, she am, fer shua!"

"Skuse me, Marcey; I meant ter say 'lily-o'-th'-valley.' It's all th' same in Greek, though, so long's ye know who I mean. Now where does this blushing primrose live?"

Marcellus informed him.

"Dis am her ebenin' out," he explained, "an' no doubt we shall find her home. Anyhow, dot was whar I was gwine, an' I had made up my mind ter ax her de great question, shua."

"Bully! If you've got yer nerve up ter that notch, th' battle is half won. Come on, afore yer sand leaks out."

Chloe Frost, when at home, resided on Thompsonson street.

Thither the two allied powers went, and were fortunate enough to find the damsel at home.

They found also the rival lover—Bob White.

Bob had his new accordion with him, and was singing and playing at his best.

Marcellus, by the way, was dressed in the latest style from crown to toe, and outshone his rival in this respect.

Chloe's parents, and all her numerous brothers and sisters, were out, and she and Bob had been having the palatial French flat of three rooms all to themselves.

When Marcellus knocked, Chloe opened the door.

"My deah Chloe," cried Marcellus, at once, in imitation of the way he had seen Bob greet her; and he sprung forward at once and grasped her hands, drew her to him and kissed her squarely on the mouth. Then he tried to say more, but bashfulness overcame him. He had so far outdone himself that the reaction placed him *hors du combat*.

"Mistah Johnsing!" exclaimed Chloe, as she drew quickly back, "how dare you!"

Billy was watching, and even as she spoke so severely, he saw her eyes glance with pride at Marcellus's stunning attire.

"Johnsing," cried Bob White, as he sprung to his feet, "how dare you intrude your personal presence inter dis room? I—I—I—have er notion to ingect you, sah!"

"Oh! draw it mild now, Robert, old socks," said Billy, as he stepped to the fore. "You'd better slide out an' take a strol with one of yer other mashes. How's that yaller gal wi' th' poodle?"

Billy had fired a big gun, and had hit the mark.

He knew Bob had another girl, and he had seen him out with her.

Chloe turned upon Bob instantly, her eyes flashing.

"What yo' mean?" Bob demanded, his face taking on an expression of confusion.

"Jest what I say," declared Billy. "How is that yaller gal, th' one wi' th' poodle? Seen ye out with her th' other evenin'?"

Chloe moved away from Bob, and a little nearer to Marcellus.

Bob started to deny it, but Billy soon cut him off.

"It is no place ter argy th' p'int, in th' pre-

sence o' this lady," he said, "an' no real gentleman would do it."

"You mean ter say I am no gentleman?" Bob fiercely demanded. "I—I—I's a notion ter hit you!"

"Actions talk," said Billy, coolly. "I ain't here ter quarrel, but ter see this charming lady on a matter o' biz. I reckon you'd better slide out an' go play that pianner fer one o' yer best gals."

Bob was wild with rage, and it was all he could do to resist the impulse to fly at Billy and Marcellus and attempt to put them out.

Billy turned to Chloe, and said:

"Miss Frost, I am here by special invite o' my esteemed friend, Marcellus, who is a friend ter be proud of. He is a *gentleman*, every inch! (Make eyes, Marcey.) He loves you, he does, Miss Frost; he loves ye more'n tongue kin tell—specially *his* tongue. Now, some old ferloserfer, I can't say jest who, has said that where true love is, th' tongue lacks words ter express it. That's jest th' case with Marcellus. He loves you dearly (eyes, Marcey;) but he can't tell his love. There's Bob, now, he's *all* talk; which goes ter show jest how much he keers fer ye. He's got more gals 'n one ter share his 'fections 'mongst."

Bob was wild.

"You lies! you low-down white trash!" he cried. "I lubs Miss Frost wi' all my heart, I does, an' I's a notion ter cut—"

"There, there, Robert, don't go on so! Ye only show off yer low breedin'. No gentleman would make sich threats in th' presence o' a beautiful young lady. Ye only hurt yer cause—"

Bob could stand no more.

Leaping up, he made a kick at Billy, and then springing forward he brought his new accordeon down upon Marcellus's head with crushing force.

And then at it the two darkies went, tooth and nail.

"Don't scream, Chloe," cried Billy, "but let 'em have it out, an' you'll see how Marcey will polish that low-down nigger off. He's n. g., Bob ain't, an' Marcey is worth a hundred of him. Don't holler, but let 'em go it."

And they were going it.

"Go in, Marcey!" urged Billy; "yer case pends on it! Now is yer time ter win th' prize! Now is yer time ter do er die!"

And "Marcey" evidently realized it.

He fought desperately.

The accordeon was soon a wreck; Marcellus's coat was soon ripped up the back; Bob's was soon minus both sleeves; and various other damages were inflicted.

It was a fight that could not last forever, but while it did last, the two darkies made the wool fly.

Presently Marcellus gained a vantage, and promptly profited by it.

"Go it!" cried Billy; "now ye've got him an' now's yer chance!"

And he was right.

By a quick move Marcellus threw Bob to the floor, and then sat down upon him.

"He's n. g., Miss Frost," cried Billy, "an' he deserves ter be pitched down-stairs."

"You's right," said Chloe, promptly. "I want you to take yo'self away from heah imme-justly, Mistah White."

"Will ye go?" demanded Marcellus, as he bore down heavily.

"Y—yes," gasped Bob, "I—I'll go. I—I gives up."

"Git up den, an' git," Marcellus ordered, as he allowed his rival to rise.

Bob got up and hastened off, uttering threats, and Marcellus kicked his broken accordeon down the stairs after him.

"Now," said Billy, when the door was closed, "let us git down ter biz. As I was a-sayin', a feller that has got an over-supply o' chin gen'lly lacks somethin' in some other quarter, an' most gen'lly it is heart; though in some cases—mine, f'rinstance—it is brain. Bob White lacks both. But here is Marcellus, who isn't any talker at all, he's *all* heart an' brain. An' th' way he loves *you* (make eyes, Marcey) is astonishin'! Why, he don't scarcely eat or sleep any more. But, like th' old ferlosofer said, he couldn't *tell* ye his love. It has been jest onpossible fer him ter git it out, an' so he's got me ter come an' tell it fer him. Now, Miss Chloe, knowin' how much he loves ye, an' what a real gentleman an' honest feller he is, I want ter ax ye (by proxerty, ye understand, fer him, not myself) if you will marry him an' make him happy fer life. (Marcey, make eyes fur all ye're worth!)"

Marcellus did, and Chloe hung her head and toyed with her apron.

"Th' court is waitin'," said Billy.

Chloe made no reply, but swung her shoulders.

"Take her hand, Marcey," Billy ordered, and Marcellus obeyed.

"Draw her to yer manly breast."

This was done.

"An' now say: Chloe, will ye?"

Marcellus did; and with a girlish gurgle of glee, Chloe threw herself into his arms and murmured "Yes."

"There," cried Billy, "I can't help ye no further, Marcey, so I'll git."

And he left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

BILLY BLOCKS THE GAME.

JARIUS RODMAN, Owen, and Josiah Green were just preparing to go out, on the evening of the following day, when there came a telegram for Owen calling him away.

"Confound it!" the young man exclaimed, "I'm called down to my club, Josiah, and can't join you and father."

"Who sends for you?" asked Jarius.

"Tony Duke; he is our president."

"Well, if you must go I suppose you must. That need not disappoint Josiah, though. I will go out with him."

"Yes, I shall have to go," said Owen. "I have a report to make that should have been sent in long ago. I suppose they want it."

"Well, then we will excuse him, eh, Josiah?"

"Certainly," answered Josiah, "though I'd like him to go with us."

The three had planned a little night excursion, for the purpose of showing Josiah the shadowed side of city life.

When Owen had gone, Jarius and the young countryman set out.

Neither of them noticed that they were followed by two men, who moved along after them like veritable shadows.

These were two detectives from Police Headquarters.

Jarius conducted his nephew through various parts of the great city, where vice and sin in all their various phases were to be seen.

"And now," said the uncle, "let us take a stroll over this way and see what we shall see."

It was now quite late in the evening.

The two followers were still upon their trail, like the sleuths they were.

Jarius led the way over into some of the darkest and most deserted of the east-side streets, and presently he took his handkerchief from his pocket and carried it in his hand.

They turned a corner, and then entered the most dismal-looking thoroughfare they had yet encountered.

As silently as shadows the two detectives drew nearer to them, keeping so close to the buildings that they were almost invisible.

Suddenly, and without warning, two men sprung out from the shadow of a deep doorway, one armed with a piece of lead pipe and the other with a long, glittering knife.

With a cry of alarm Josiah sprung back, and the one with the lead pipe struck Jarius a blow on the head, knocking him to the ground.

Then both sprung at Josiah.

Much to their surprise, though, two policemen sprung out from the very doorway next to where they had been in hiding, and confronted them with drawn revolvers.

These two policemen had been in hiding there as long as the would-be murderers themselves.

"Hands up!" they cried, "or die!"

And, almost at the same moment, up rushed the two detectives and handcuffed them.

"Gosh tew fiddles!" exclaimed Josiah, as he looked on with staring eyes; and then came another exclamation— "Sweet pertaters!" and Broadway Billy jumped out and danced a breakdown.

"Come!" said a policeman, giving Jarius a poke, "get up, old man. Your game is blocked."

Jarius feigned insensibility, but when one of the detectives put a pair of handcuffs on him, he came to with a rush and protested loudly against the "outrage."

"Tain't no use, old hoss," said Broadway Billy; "your jig is up. We got onter yer, we did, an' yer pesky game is blocked. Josiah, this was a put-up job by yer 'fectionate uncle."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Josiah, "if it hain't th' feller that sold me a knife t'other day!"

"Right ye are, my dear; an' if I hadn't sold ye that toad-sticker, an' so made yer acquaintance, you'd be a dead Jerseyman now, sure pop!"

"Gosh! ye don't mean it!"

But, Billy did mean it, and when the young countryman saw his uncle led away a prisoner,

it dawned upon him that something was wrong somewhere.

The prisoners were locked up, and half an hour later Tony Duke and Sharkey Dan were sent to join them.

When Owen Rodman learned the truth of the matter, he could not believe it, and he and Josiah were greatly shocked.

Next morning, though, when Jarius Rodman's dead body was found hanging to the door of his cell, and a written confession was found, all doubt of his guilt was removed.

The shock to the old grandfather was not so great as might have been expected.

He seemed but little surprised.

To Owen, though, it was a sad affair indeed.

"I knowned there was a consarned diffikilty a-brewin'," asserted Billy, "when he told his story in detail to the two young men, 'an' I made up my mind ter block th' game er bu'st. I don't say it ter boast, Josiah, but I reckon if I hadn't spotted yer worthy uncle a-p'intin' ye out ter Tony, you'd 'a' felt a knife in yer internal regions last night, sure."

Tony Duke and his miserable tools were severely dealt with, and Sharkey Dan was sent back to prison.

The latter swore vengeance and hatred undying against the boy detective.

Billy was rewarded, and, true to his word, he went and found the sailors who had rescued him, and treated them right royally, winning their lasting friendship.

And when he told them all about his adventures, they listened with bated breath.

"Great Neptune!" exclaimed the one who had read the stories about the daring young bootblack, "but this is as good as yer other adventures, my lad, an' I s'pose this one will be gettin' into th' story-books, too."

Billy is very reticent upon this point, but we take the liberty to assure his sailor friend that as often as the boy has any adventures worth repeating, the story shall be told.

The sailors were very urgent in their invitation to Billy to join them in their next voyage, but Billy said he was afraid he might get seasick.

Our story is told.

Owen Rodman and Josiah Green are as firm friends as ever, and the old grandfather's will remains unaltered.

At this writing, the old man is still living, and the grandsons hope he may enjoy many years more of life.

Marcellus Johnson and Chloe Frost are engaged now, and evidently Marcellus has "found his tongue."

Bob White gives him a clear field, and no doubt Marcellus will carry off the prize.

Broadway Billy and his partner "Skinny" are getting along finely with their corner stand, and are banking some money every week.

Evidently they are on the road to success.

Billy often urges Skinny to join the fat men's club, and gives him much other advice, all in playful derision of his remarkable thinness, but Skinny takes it all in good part.

Billy attends night-school, and is now picking up learning quite rapidly. When on the street, though, he falls back into his old bootblack *patois*.

"No use tryin' ter drive any l'arnin' through my hair," he protests. "I ain't got no brains, an' I reckon some o' that article is necessary ter start with. Leave me an' Skinny alone, an' I reckon we'll git along somehow. If Skinny wasn't so fat he'd be purtier to look at, but what he lacks in beauty he makes up in hoss-sense. We're bound ter be self-made, we are, like Stewart was, f'rinstance; an' we're bound ter git thar if th' traces don't bu'st. Sweet taters, yes!"

THE END.

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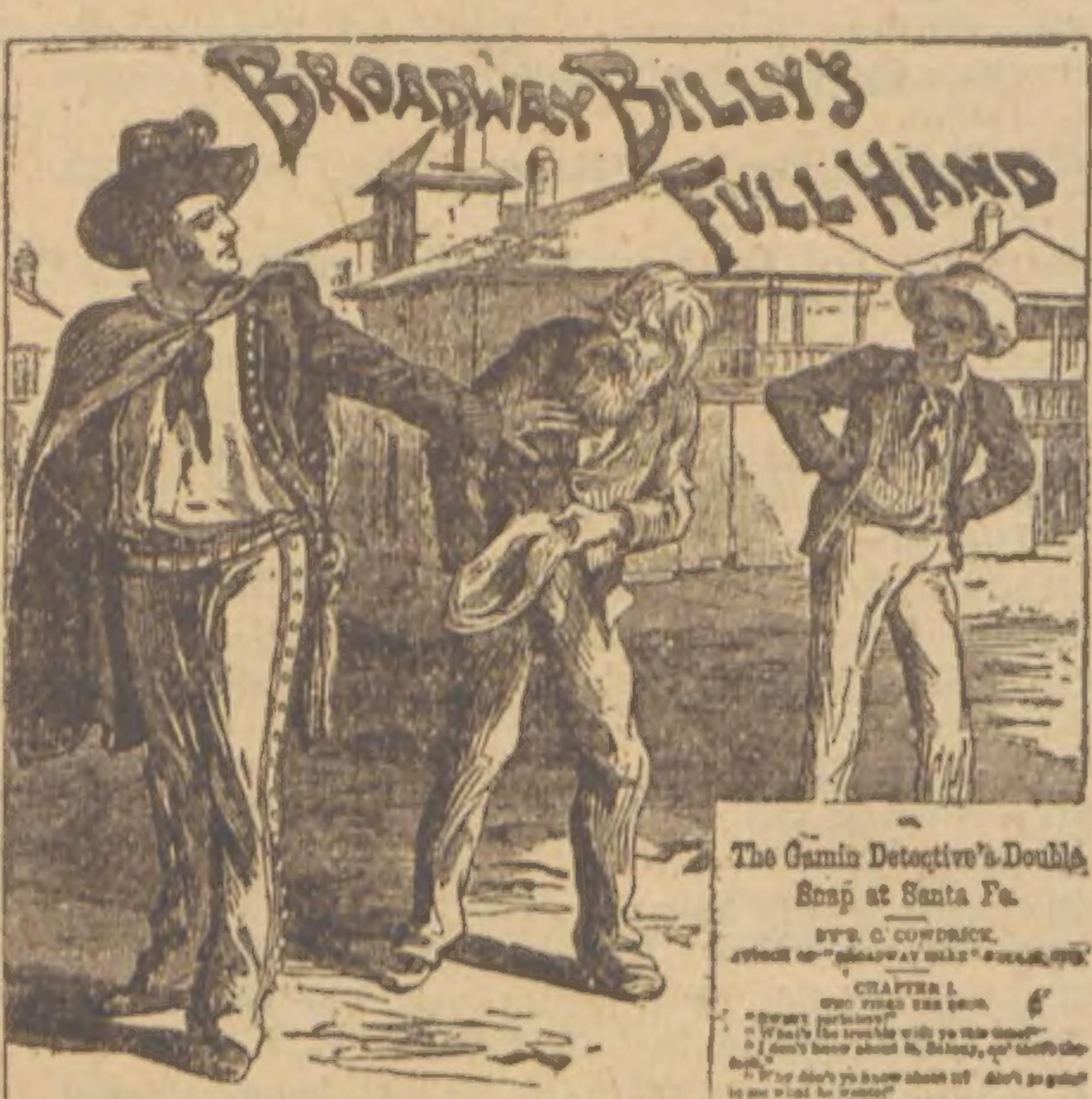
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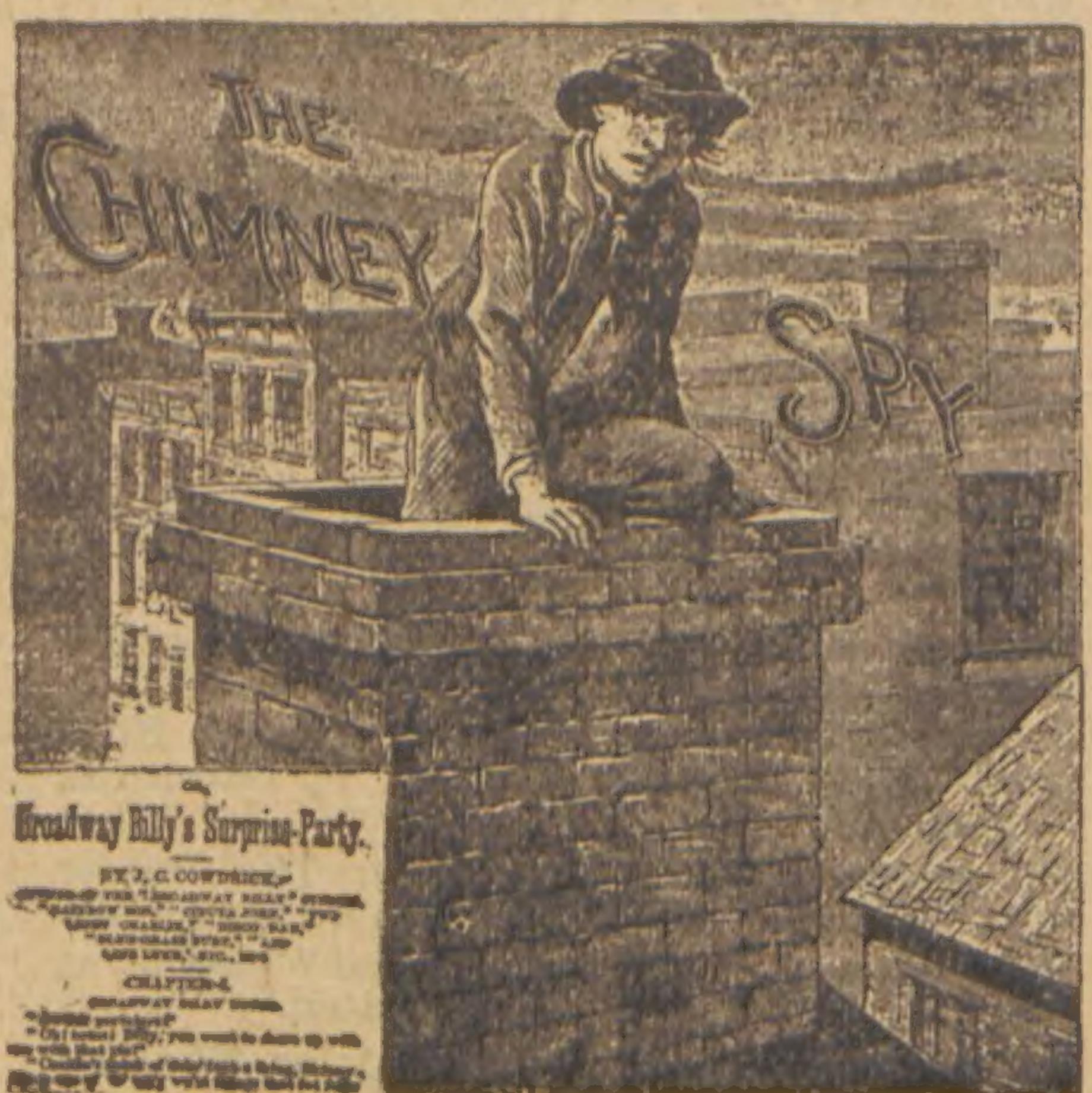
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